ASPECTS OF REUNION

HAROLD H. ROWLEY

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ASPECTS OF REUNION

CHAPTER I

THE GOAL

THE multiplicity of the divisions of the Christian Church has long been a subject of widespread lament. There are, indeed, some who champion division *per se*, pointing out the universal tendency of unchallenged institutions to become lax and corrupt, and finding in the divisions an appeal to man's competitive instinct that is healthy for the Church, or in the jealous eye of section upon section a guardian power that would else be lacking. "Divided we stand, united we fall," is their somewhat extraordinary motto, and their Christ stands over the Church of His unredeemed followers, bearing the legend on His banner *Divide et impera*, His only prospect of keeping their zeal for Himself keen being to turn the edge of their swords against one another. The cynic pours his ridicule upon a faith which boldly proclaims its power to reconcile the sinner to his God and to his fellow man, yet is wholly powerless to reconcile the saint to his fellow saint, and scornfully asks

for the fruits of its reconciling ministry in its own fellowship. The man in the street finds the divisions a convenient excuse to deliver himself from the demands of the Christian faith, and says he will consider its claims when the Churches have settled amongst themselves just what is the faith he is called upon to accept. When he is told that the faith is one, and that all the Churches hold the same essential faith, he smiles sardonically, and says he will believe in that essential oneness when the thing that so patently strikes him is no longer the essential multiplicity.

I

Within the Churches there are growing numbers who feel that these divisions are a scandal and a disgrace. They go back to the historical rise of several of the Denominations, and they find little comfort. It is universally recognized now that John Wesley was a great man and a great Christian, and that if the Church of England had had common prudence, not to say a truly Christian spirit, she would not have driven him and his followers out of her bosom. But on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the spirit of the Church of England is not to-day what it was in the eighteenth century. It numbers in its fellowship many men who have the same spirit as Wesley, yet it does not to-day account them unworthy. Why then should the mistake of the

eighteenth century be perpetuated to the end of time, and perpetuated too throughout the whole world? To go back farther, it is clear that the Puritans protested against an unholy laxity and deadness in the Church, and that they brought with them the breath of life and passion. But is it not equally clear that to-day those who have inherited the traditions of the Puritans have not the monopoly of their spirit? Are there not many who have inherited the organization of their persecutors who have nothing in common with that persecution, but who belong to the same essential spiritual fellowship as the Puritans?

It is not merely the historical origin of the divisions, however, which is deplorable. There are many who feel that their present existence is a standing disgrace to the name of Christ. They believe that if men are truly reconciled to God in Jesus Christ they ought to be thereby reconciled to one another. They believe that all the New Testament exhortations to mutual love should be taken seriously. They believe that all who follow Christ, and find the spring and inspiration of their life in Him, ought to be knit together in bonds of the fullest and holiest fellowship. They believe that if we do, in living experience, have fellowship with Christ, that should be in itself a greater link between us than all that divides. If He is content to give us His fellowship, why should we set up barriers between ourselves, and claim that we are more particular and more exclusive than He is? Our common friendship

with Him, the supreme privilege that life holds for us, should become the basis of our fellowship with one another. Yea, further. If we truly have found Christ, and have been possessed by His Spirit, not merely *ought* we to be one fellowship, but we *must* be. The seed of fellowship has been planted in us, and is irresistible in its growth, so that our lack of fellowship is not so much a breach of His commands as a denial of Him. In so far as we fail of fellowship with His disciples we repudiate Him.

II

It must be confessed, however, that much of the talk of Reunion does not rest on this kind of principle, which is drawn from the very essence of the Gospel. A reason which weighs far more with many who look forward with hope to Reunion is the inexpediency of our present divisions. They think of the waste of energy and the waste of money involved in our present state. They talk of the overlapping, and the frittering away of our resources, both human and material. And they calculate on the kind of spectacular impression that a Reunited Church will make on the common man.

It is just here that our peril lies. We are apt to pass from the proposition that our present state is deplorable to the further proposition that Union is desirable, and to think that the essential principle of the matter has been settled, and that all that

remains is to arrange the details. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Union *per se* is nothing. Prior to the Reformation there was in Western Europe one Church. We do not execrate the memory of one, Martin Luther, who destroyed that unity and brought the seed of division in. We do not hail the efficiency and economy of the Church that existed before the source of our overlapping and waste had been opened. We read our history and we find a great Church making, indeed, a spectacular impression on the common man, who found no difficulty in handing himself over to this unchallenged institution—and, incidentally, living in superstition, and in complete ignorance of the spiritual essence of the faith he professed. And we recognize that it is not so much Union that is desirable as Christian Union. We have to work not only to make the Church one again, but to see that its oneness rests on an essentially Christian foundation. It is not that the desirability of Reunion is the principle, and that the basis is just a matter of details, but rather that the basis is from beginning to end a matter of principle, and that the worth of the Reunited Church would not lie in its being one, but in the nature of its basis.

We have but to look into the life of any of the present Denominations. Within each organized unit there are grave divisions of spirit. There is a spirit of inner strife abroad in the Churches, and mutual recriminations are common. Within the same congregation one too commonly finds the

spirit of division. It is not hard to find members of the same Church who know one another perfectly well, who, through some petty quarrel, or some personal jealousy, or some trivial social difference, never speak to one another. There is a Church —unfortunately there are probably others like it— where two of the deacons were for a long time not on speaking terms. They sat together at the Lord's Table—nay, they handed round the elements to others to partake—but they never partook themselves. The symbols they may have taken, but they were unreal—symbols of nothing. Look into the life of many a prominent leader of the Churches, and of many a humble member too. You will find again and again that the whole spirit of Christ is repudiated in the home and the business. The trouble is that the Churches have nothing to say on these things,[1] and none of these people have the slightest consciousness that the Christian Church is the most incongruous place under the sun for them to be found in. Yet their existence within the Churches is at least as scandalous and as deplorable as the existence of the divisions between the Denominations. And what we must ask of the Reunited Church is that it shall abolish all in each Church that is scandalous, and that it shall rest on a Christian unity of spirit. The only kind of Reunion which is going to be worth while is that which shall make the Church not only one but Christian.

Much of the present talk seems to take it for granted that any kind of unity that is practicable

is desirable. It does not concern itself with the spiritual condition of the Church at all. It is only concerned with drawing up a treaty of union. It has descended from the atmosphere of principle to the atmosphere of compromise. The approaches to Reunion have the appearance of negotiations on the basis of the strength and influence of the various Churches. For instance, it cannot be maintained that the pretensions that have been put forward on behalf of episcopacy are really established, but we are reminded that it has had a long history, and that it is so widely accepted that it is only reasonable to expect that it will be continued in the Reunited Church.[2] It is not commended as being in itself the most desirable, or the ideal, form of Church organization. It is only too influential for us to expect it to succumb. In the abstract few would concede that antiquity and multitude of followers are the test of the worth of religious institutions, or Christianity itself would be hard put to it to defend itself, and in its early days it would appear to have been an unjustified institution on our own principle.

This spirit cannot give us the Reunited Church we need. It may give us a patchwork organization, born of the spirit of compromise and diplomacy. It may lead Churches of influence and prestige graciously to concede a few points for the sake of unity, and to accept some of the features of the incorporated Churches. But that far from meets our need. It offers us no prospect of a Church in which unity of Spirit will replace

the present inner divisions. It offers us but the shell of a common organization, which would gather within its ample range an even greater inner diversity than we now have. Even if it held out for us the promise of unity of spirit, if it were but the spirit of compromise in which it had its birth, it would soon be as great a scandal as the existing divisions are. For the spirit of compromise and the spirit of Jesus are not one, but two.

III

But over against the compromising, negotiating souls there are the people of "principle," who are the enemies of Reunion from Alpha to Omega. Unfortunately "principle" is a great word, much overworked and greatly abused, and the only principle which lies behind much of the opposition to Reunion is but prejudice. And this kind of opposition is as great a scandal to the Churches as the spirit of compromise. Compromise is of the world, but prejudice is of the Devil.

Probably half the members of our Churches could give scant reason for their denominationalism. Some are brought up in a particular Church, and that is sufficient reason for adhering to it. Some are converted in a particular Church, and ask no other reason for belonging to it. Many have poorer reasons. Many Nonconformist Churches could tell of the sons of their wealthier members passing over to the Church of England,

assuredly not from any high conviction, but from considerations of prestige and social standing. On the other hand, many, if they were perfectly honest, would have to confess that they were Non-conformists because of the "say" that democratic institutions give them in their management, a "say" which is not always exercised in a Christian spirit or to the manifest glory of God. Certain it is that in our day men can pass with the greatest ease from one Denomination to another, tripping lightly over the borders, little troubled by any of the differences between them when convenience or interest demand it. Perhaps marriage is one of the greatest converters.

But while the hand of conviction rests more lightly on our generation, the bondage of prejudice is not relaxed, and men who to-morrow will change their Church without hesitation will to-day be aghast if you so much as propose the slightest modification of their order of service even. They have a tenacious spirit of conservatism in the face of every change that is suggested from without—from without their own hearts, that is. Propose anything, and they will oppose "on principle." They believe they are keen denominationalists, when they are really nothing of the kind, and their blood brothers are in every Church. If they are Baptists, they will stoutly maintain that Believers' Baptism by immersion is the only Scriptural form of Baptism—mainly on the ground that they have been told so—and they will judge every Reunion proposal by its attitude to this

rite, as though this alone mattered. They will often talk as though the test of a man's Christianity is whether he has been Scripturally baptized, as though the real test of a living spiritual experience could be found in an outer and symbolical rite. Granted that Christian scholarship in general agrees that the original baptism was by immersion, and on profession of faith, it yet does not follow that the symbol is of greater importance than the experience symbolized, or that the symbol is the *sine qua non* of the reality. On the other hand, if they are not Baptists, they will as tenaciously cling to the superstitious rite of Infant Baptism, though many of them will attempt to rob it of superstition by robbing it at the same time of all genuine baptismal significance, alleging that they only regard it as a dedication. But if you suggest that in the interests of clear thinking they should call it dedication and not something else, they will decline with fervour. Those who are not content to attach dedicatory significance alone to their rite will give it a significance which certainly does not belong to the essential meaning of the New Testament baptism, yet they will refuse to give up the term, or cease to equate it to that which it most certainly is not, as though all depended upon this piece of self-deception. If they are Episcopalians, they will talk solemnly of the Historic Episcopate and of Apostolic Succession, ignoring all inconvenient facts in New Testament history, ignoring the Holy Spirit's choice of Paul as against the setting of Matthias in the

Apostolic Succession, ignoring the fact that the whole doctrine of Apostolic Succession is clean out of harmony with the genius of the Christian faith. No more than an external rite, like baptism, can be made the test of one's possession of a spiritual experience can an external act, like the laying on of certain people's hands, be the *sine qua non* of a spiritual call. If they are Congregationalists, they will turn assiduously to their New Testaments for the foundations of their order, which to them is sacrosanct. They will take no account of the hopeless incapacity of many of their Churches to deal sanely with the recurring problem of the vacant pastorate, or of the scandalous indifference of a large proportion of their members to the exercise of those democratic rights they so passionately champion, or of the records of some of their Church Meetings, which are little more creditable than the Council of Ephesus. Most of this really means no more than "What we have been we will remain, and we will scour any place that will yield us reasons for our obduracy."

There is a negative side of all this. Each is concerned not only for the defence of the citadel of its own practice, but for the attack of the others. There is a readiness to bandy charges of heresy against this Denomination, of wire-pulling against that, as though the former were confined to those Churches which are not protected by a sufficiently stringent Creed, and the latter to those Churches which are not protected by the

pure stream of democracy. There is a remarkable readiness to see the faults of every system but one's own, and an entire forgetfulness of Christ's penetrating parable of the mote and the beam. Most of this deadweight of opposition is not really principle at all, but merely prejudice—which is bastard cousin to principle. In so far as it is prejudice it is worthless, and as great a disgrace to the Churches as the compromising spirit of others.

IV

Not all the opposition is born of prejudice, however. There are some who fear that nothing more is contemplated than an unworthy compromise, which will take the low ground of expediency, and which will give us but a heterogeneous and unwieldy organization vainly masquerading as a unity. They really desire a genuine unity, but fear a counterfeit. On the other hand, not all the support of Reunion comes from timid and compromising souls. There are many who believe heartily in Reunion, and who earnestly long for the Church to be not only one but reborn. Between this kind of opposition and this kind of support there is really an inner affinity, and it is these who are the only hope of the situation. Let them understand one another and get to work together, and they may lead us to our goal, and deliver us from our present distractions. Let them agree that Reunion is desirable only if it is a

desirable Reunion. Its test must not be the fact of Reunion, but the character of the Reunion. Let them recognize that the Christian Church is a spiritual fellowship, which cannot be judged primarily by its organization, nor by the elaborations of its teachings in credal statements. It must be judged primarily by its purity—that is to say, by the extent to which it is the embodiment of the Spirit of Christ in the world, and the instrument of His will.

To secure such a Church, it is needed that men who heartily believe in it should gather together, not to form a compromise, but in the spirit of fellowship and adventure, to explore the mind and will of Christ. They will seek first of all, not what is practicable, but what is ideal. They will be prepared to think everything out *de novo*, absolutely without prejudice. They will be prepared to be led anywhere by the Spirit of God, even to the creation of a totally new organization with marks that are not found in any existing Church. No question of negotiation, or of the strength and influence of various Churches will arise or be implicit. The sole question will be, "What is the true Ideal for the Christian Church, and how best can we embody that Ideal in concrete reality?" They will not start from the irreducible minimum of each Church's demands, but with this ideal, dim at first, but growing clearer as it is explored. They will have a vision of the Church as a spiritual fellowship of redeemed souls, and they will seek to create a Church where

only true Christians shall be at home, a Church where only those who have had vital experience of God in Jesus Christ shall be welcomed into the brotherhood—men who have not merely had a momentary emotion, but who have found a living and continuous experience, that manifests itself in every aspect of their life, in business, in the home, and in the Church. The Church they will seek to build will be stripped of all its worldliness and materialism and opportunism, and will breathe alone the spirit of Christ. It will be freed alike from superstition and from hypocrisy. It will be filled with a surpassing love of the Lord Jesus, and an irresistible passion in the service of God and man. It will consist of those who feel that God alone matters, that business and prospects, life and death, are of no account compared with the bringing of the world into His glorious fellowship. It will be a Church where none shall be able to feel that by attending a certain minimum of services, and by giving some fraction of their money they have fulfilled their duty, but where all will realize that they must give *themselves* in utter sincerity. It will be a Church marked in all its life by the spirit of a great crusade, where all the resources, men and money, mind, time and energy, will be thrown into the service of Christ at the imperious bidding of an inner constraint. It will be a Church realizing that its supreme task is to win the world, and not content with talking about it and making infinitesimal progress, but spending itself in deter-

mined effort to achieve it. It will not pray "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as in heaven" as a pious wish, but as a programme for itself, and it will wage ruthless war on all in the life of our age that is manifestly not in accordance with the will of the God Who was revealed in Jesus Christ. They will have the vision of such a Church, and they will ask how they can bring it into being. They will not think at all of a great Church, where all our existing Churches can be brought under the spacious roof of a single organization. They will think alone of a pure Church, seeking truth, seeking men, seeking Christ, and whether it be small or large matters little. Their first concern will not be to see that it becomes the Universal Church, but that it is worthy to be, and it will then be vital and potent. It will be their desire, indeed, that it shall become the one Universal Church, but their determination that whether it does or no, it shall be worthy to be, that whatever its size it shall be pure. Such a Church, be it repeated, cannot be found by starting from the standpoint of our existing differences, and finding formulas which will bring us together by their comprehensive ambiguity. It can only be found by fellowship in thought and prayer, starting from our common faith and experience, and seeking to create an organism which shall enshrine it and only it.

It may be said that all this is too idealistic and unpractical. In a world of hard reality you must be more severely practical. But the

Christian Church must be first and foremost idealistic. It must believe that the ideal is the supremely real, and the supremely practical, for the heroic venture which launches right out after the ideal is infinitely more practical than the cautious policy of compromise. In the creative ages of history men have not been afraid. They have proclaimed new conceptions which to their age were strange and revolutionary. They have not sought newness as an end in itself, but they have followed the light that came to them whithersoever it led them. We in our day are awaiting a new creative era. Let us look aloft and afar, not striving after newness for its own sake, nor feeling bondage to the past or the present, but reaching out after the mind of Christ in all its fulness, with the solemn vow that we will follow the light as we see it. Let the Church of our dreams and the Church of our aims be one, and we shall be found to be doing the utmost possible to bring in the day when the visible Church shall be one and indivisible, holy and pure, the body of Christ, and the instrument of His will.

CHAPTER II

GOVERNMENT

THE discussion of the Government of the Reunited Church does not seem in general to follow the lines of worth and fitness for its task. It keeps mainly to lines which to us appear misleading and perilous. It is obsessed with the idea of authority, round which various theories have gathered. No complaint can be made against the idea of authority in itself, but the trouble is that it is tacitly assumed that all authority is derived from the past. It is this assumption, lying behind most of the talk of authority, that vitiates it. It is commonly regarded as an axiom that authority attaches to the practice of Apostolic times, and that any system with serious claims on the Christian Church must establish itself in relation to the use of the Early Church. Perhaps the Methodist bodies are the only ones who are indifferent to this relation, and it is significant that it is tacitly agreed that whatever form or forms the Reunited Church may adopt, the Methodist system will not be retained. That agreement may or may not be sound, but it requires some more solid ground than variance from Apostolic practice and terminology.

I

Episcopacy is the most insistent on its claims on the Church, and it is perhaps here that the word authority is most frequently heard. One School of advocates of Episcopal government claims that authority was vested by Christ in His Apostles, who handed on that authority to others, and so in unbroken stream through the ages. The only authority is that which has been derived from Apostolic authority, through the medium of their successors. The only valid ministry is that which is exercised in virtue of appointment by such authority, with the laying on of hands.

Such a theory of authority has not been allowed to pass unchallenged. It is criticised on the question of fact, for there is nothing in the New Testament to suggest such a theory. We read of the appointment of Matthias by the eleven,[3] but this is wholly irrelevant. The appointment of Matthias seems to have been felt to be a mistake, and the Apostles never repeated the fiasco. Matthias was not a Bishop, nor an Archbishop, nor a priest, and none of these terms is used of him any more than of the other Apostles. He was appointed to be of the number of "The Twelve," and appointed, be it observed, under the persuasion that their numbers must be twelve and no more. That persuasion was of the essence of the ordination. Neither that notion, nor the ordination to which it gave rise, recur, and it was thereafter tacitly agreed that "The Twelve" were

a body that was not to be renewed. From a type of ordination which was never repeated it is difficult to conclude a type of ordination which is never recorded.[4] It is true that we also read of the ordination of the Seven Deacons by the Apostles,[5] but they were appointed for a secular ministry, and not a spiritual one. Their office was a lay office, and not a priestly. We know that two of them at least also exercised a spiritual ministry, but we have no record of their ordination for this ministry, and no grounds whatever for assuming it. Further, while Matthias, the duly ordained, disappears from history on the day of his ordination, exercising no recorded influence or authority in the Church, James, the Lord's brother, is found in Jerusalem exercising considerable influence and authority.[6] There can be nothing more than pure assumption that he was ever apostolically ordained. Not even assumption is allowed in the case of Paul, however, who exercised an influence over the Early Church, and indeed over the whole history of the Church, greater than any other. He declares quite unequivocally that his authority was not apostolically derived.[7] It is true that we read of him being set apart for his missionary service with the laying on of hands, but this is equally damaging for the theory. For they were not Bishops' hands. They were the hands of teachers and prophets in the Church of Antioch.[8]

But the theory is open to other objection. It is patently falsified in history. It would render

valid the orders of the worst of the Popes ; it would render invalid the orders of some of the finest and most effective workers who have ever entered the service of Christ. If any conclusive evidence were forthcoming to prove that Christ ever tied authority to minister to the episcopally ordained, we should be driven to conclude that He made a grim mistake. If He acknowledged Cæsar Borgia, while repudiating Robert Hall, and William Carey, to name but two, His wisdom would inevitably be in serious question. Fortuately we are not limited to that alternative, but can freely reject a theory which would reduce us to it.

Moreover, the theory takes too little account of the living Christ, or of the Holy Spirit. To think that the authority of Christ only entered the Church at one point in history, from which it can only be mediately derived, is extraordinary if He Himself is still present in the Church. If His presence is in any sense real and vital, how can it be denied that He who commissioned the first disciples has authority still to commission? If it be answered that it is still He who does commission, but through the Bishops, it must be replied that His commission is only window dressing if the sole real test is the episcopal ordination, and if His manifestly effective commission to non-episcopally ordained men is denied validity. The commissioning Christ has his hands tied by His agents.

There are others who realize that this theory will not do. Most certainly the Reunited Church

could never be built on it. Many therefore, who are equally attached to the idea of episcopacy, seek to strengthen their ground by finding fresh defence of the Bishops. Recognizing that episcopacy as we now know it did not exist in New Testament times, they find the seed of it in the New Testament, and claim that it is a legitimate growth from that seed, a growth, too, which matured at a very early date. The Episcopos of the New Testament may not have been identical with a modern Bishop, but the latter is his lineal descendant. This is ingenious in that it begs the question—which is not whether episcopacy is a legitimate growth from the seed of Apostolic practice, but whether it is the only legitimate growth, whether the Church must be episcopally governed to be a true Church. When it is proposed to impose it on the whole Church, and to recognize no orders but those which are episcopally conferred, a little care must be exercised. We have from this School the admission that non-episcopal ministries have been used of God in the past. They had therefore the only validity that mattered. But if we are to decline to recognize any but episcopally ordained ministries in the future, whether or not we throw over the theory of Apostolic Succession matters little. We shall be declaring in effect that though Christ has given in the past valid authority to non-episcopal ministries, we will not allow that He can do so for the future. We will agree that our past declarations that only episcopally ordained

ministries were valid were without justification, but we will reaffirm them, believing that now at last they are true.

II

It is interesting to turn to another Church which endeavours to derive the authority of its system from the New Testament. The term Bishop being discredited for them by its history and associations, they light upon another Apostolic term. They will not, however, adopt its current, shortened form of "priest," which has also lost its reputation, but return to the original "presbyter," which in the New Testament was apparently synonymous with the rejected "episcopos."[9] It would be difficult to establish any exact correspondence between the modern Presbyterian system and the New Testament organization, but probably for most it is sufficient to feel that the seeds of the system were sown in the New Testament times, when Presbyters were men of authority in the Church, and that though the seeds were for a long time growing secretly, and the splendour of their fruition was long delayed, nevertheless the modern system, adapted so splendidly to the present needs of the Church, is a true and legitimate growth from them. This is a perfectly harmless contention, since it is nowhere seriously argued to-day that this is the only legitimate growth, or that a Reunited Church, to be a true Church, must be Presbyterian in its organization.

III

Congregationalists—and since Baptists are Congregationalists in their Church polity, they are here included—turn also to the New Testament. Many of them are convinced that here they find not only the seeds of their present system, but the system—or, to be more precise, lack of system—itself in all essentials. They are doubtful of the tendency of Congregationalism during the last generation, and more particularly during the last few years, in which it has become more centralized, partly through the creation of central endowments, and partly through the appointment of divisional advisers to the Churches, bearing the titles of "Moderators" and "Superintendents." They feel that in these tendencies Congregationalism is false to itself, and that when it is true to its genius, it is identical with the practice of the Apostolic days. This contention is far from established. Paul, for instance, wrote to the Churches of which he was no longer the Minister in charge in a tone of authority that these modern Congregationalists would most certainly not allow that anyone was entitled to address them in. It may be urged that Paul was exceptional, but that is simply to rob the appeal to the Apostolic Age of all reality, since the Apostolic Age without Paul is worse than Hamlet without the Prince. Moreover, modern Congregationalism has its Deacons. So has the New Testament. But they are by no means one in office or function. In the New

Testament they are the almoners of the Church, and have no charge of the specifically spiritual interests of the Church. In Congregationalism they are too often the lords of the Church, charging themselves with the control of every aspect of the Church's life, and instead of concerning themselves with the secular cares of the Church and freeing the Minister for the spiritual work, too often leaving him the whole burden of organizing the finances of the Church, while they adjudge his theology, or dictate the message which he is to deliver—a state of affairs which may perhaps have existed in New Testament times, but which is nowhere commended to us. Nor do we find in the New Testament pattern the Church which is dominated by one rich man, who feels that as he pays the piper he is justified in calling the tune, believing that the Minister is much more directly and definitely *his* servant than the servant of Jesus Christ. Let Congregationalists argue that their system is a legitimate development of New Testament practice, and little complaint can be made. But it cannot be allowed that their practice is identical with New Testament practice, or that a Reunited Church *must* be marked by that system.

IV

It is tacitly agreed by supporters of all these three types of Church government that ultimate authority belongs to the Church of the New

Testament and Apostolic Age. But that assumption itself needs some examining. Manifestly it is not at all clear what the organization of those days was, or there could not be all this disagreement. In the New Testament we find only scattered and casual references to the form of the Church organization, and it is exceedingly hard, to say the least, to piece them together into a consistent and established whole. Neither the Apostles nor the writers of the New Testament had any feeling that organization was in any way a vital matter. If it had been deemed of vital importance, we may be sure that it would have been set down in no equivocal terms.

The Apostolic Church was not a carefully designed organism at all. It just grew. At first the disciples were in doubt as to whether it was to be a separate Society at all, or whether the Christians were to be just a group within the Synagogue. When it became clear that they would have to exist as a separate and distinct body, scant attention was given at first to organization. The Church had a deeply rooted conviction —a mistaken conviction, as it turned out—that Christ was going to return in the flesh very soon, when the end would come. What need, then, to plan out a careful system of machinery for the maintenance and propagation of the faith?

Moreover, how can we believe that all authority is derived from the past if we believe that Christ Himself is present in His Church to-day? There is no authority but Christ, and whether He speaks

to us in the immediacy of our experience to-day, or whether He speaks to us through the past, His word must be our law. But we must not deny the reality of His present authority by saying we will only listen to His word if it has come to us through the Apostolic Age. That is to exalt the Apostles above their Lord.

It would be well if this could be recognized much more courageously and frankly. The New Testament has no authoritative word for us on the question of Church organization. It has no clear word at all on the matter, and even if it had a clear indication of the practice of Apostolic days, in the absence of any definite word that Christ had ordained it as binding on the Church to the end of time, we should not be justified in concluding that He had no further word to say to us on the matter. The New Testament has no more authoritative word for us on Church organization than it has on Church architecture, and we are perfectly free to-day, depending on the direct leadership and authority of the ever present Spirit of Him we serve, to create an organization which shall be the fitting instrument in our day of the faith we profess. But we must give up all our prejudices. We shall not reject any suggestion on the ground that it is not found in the New Testament, nor on the other hand shall we rush to embrace it simply because it is not found there. We shall neither strive after newness, nor be afraid of it. It may be that we shall conclude that episcopacy is the best form of organization

for our day. If so, let us frankly accept it on that ground, and on no other. We shall not be afraid of that good Scriptural term Bishop if only we are assured that it denotes an office utterly in harmony with the genius of our faith. Our Nonconformist fathers were not afraid of the term. We had occasion once to turn up the foundation declaration of a Baptist Church, established over a century ago. It commonly referred to its Minister as its Bishop, but it gave to the term a content which it felt was more in harmony with New Testament usage than the content given by its neighbours to the episcopate of him who lived in a palace but a few yards off. Let us not be afraid of a term, but frankly see whether the functions of the office it is to be used to denote are appropriate to our needs. It may be that some combination of episcopacy, presbyterianism and congregationalism, such as is now indicated,[10] will be devised, that will at once connect with the New Testament and with the existing main types of Church government. Provided it be a genuine unity, and not an unwelded agglomeration, and provided it prove thoroughly adaptable to our needs, let us welcome it. But let us welcome it on no other grounds. Let us not be concerned that it shall have something to satisfy everybody, but that it shall be worthy to do the work that Christ shall entrust to it. And if we find that something quite different is required, a system with officers bearing names quite different from any found in the New Testament, and whose

functions cannot be identified with those of any known person of the Apostolic Age, let us not fear to step forward. Let us remember that it is the Spirit that maketh alive, and let us find a system with the breath of the Spirit upon it, and one that will in no way quench the Spirit.

CHAPTER III

ORDERS

We may turn next to consider the question of the Ministry. The subject which seems to have absorbed nearly all the interest hitherto in the discussion of the matter has been the method of admission to the ministry. We will therefore begin with that aspect of the question. We have already said that we cannot affirm, either for the past or the future, that only episcopally ordained ministries are valid. When it is proposed that the Ministers of non-episcopal Churches should undergo episcopal ordination on entering the Reunited Church, the proposal can only be rejected, because to all plain men it would say that their previous ministry had lacked something essential, which was now being added to it. But if reordination is not insisted on, we have already seen that the case is no better if it is held that for the future only episcopal ordination shall validify orders.

I

We must be careful, however, to examine precisely what is meant. Suppose it is conceded that

the Bishop has not the right to ordain any whom he pleases, giving valid right to minister at his personal pleasure, so that different standards of fitness to minister obtain in different dioceses. Suppose the episcopacy is reformed, not only in the manner of its appointment, but also in the exercise of its functions. Suppose some body is constituted, representing the whole Church, and consisting of men who in its considered judgement are best qualified to examine a man's fitness for the office of Minister, and that episcopal ordination is but the sequel to acceptance by this body. Is it not robbed of its terrors? Does it not become a harmless and automatic ceremony, performed by the Bishops indeed, but at the bidding of this other body, who thus for all practical purposes replace the Bishops as the admitting authority? What ground would, say, Baptists for instance, then have to object to the harmless form of ordination? What material difference would there be between that and the existing practice of the Baptists?

It may be instructive to compare the present practice of the Baptists. Ordination is of no great account amongst them, and the word is not much in their vocabulary. It is replaced, however, by "Recognition." A Central Committee—the Ministerial Recognition Committee—is charged with this important function, and when it is assured, by such tests as it may impose, under the sanction of the Annual Assembly, that a man is duly qualified to exercise his ministry, it "recognizes"

him. It does not ordain him, but it places his name upon its published list of Ministers—which for all practical purposes is equivalent to ordaining him. At first indeed he is a probationer, but on further proof of his fitness he is "fully accredited." Moreover, the Baptists themselves now propose that every year, at their Annual Assembly, Ministers who have become fully accredited during the year should be publicly presented and solemnly set apart to their office. What material difference is there between this and ordination by Bishops on the recommendation of a duly appointed Board?

There may be some Baptists who will reply that such setting apart as they propose will not derive its validity from the person who at the Annual Assembly will be its mouthpiece, whereas any limiting of this function to a Bishop would at least give that impression. But after all, if ordination is to be, in effect, a public and formal recognition of a Committee's acceptance, on behalf of the whole Church, and the real thing is the Committee's acceptance, no very profound objection could be taken to its being performed by Bishops, if the Reunited Church finds it wise to retain any officers bearing that title.

But are we not thrown back on our earlier difficulty? If we affirm that episcopal ordination is not the sure mark of the true and valid ministry, can we affirm that recognition by a Committee is the sure mark? Cannot Committees err? And have there been no ministries in the past which had not the imprimatur of a national or general

Committee's recognition upon them, but which were manifestly blessed of God? Can we assert that for the future God cannot bless the labours of men who are unrecognized by such a Committee?

There will be Baptists who will not be slow to perceive that our thinking is by no means clear, for we have not yet appreciated the position of their Denomination. What they affirm in the setting up of their Recognition Committee is not that recognition is necessary to validity of orders. The Baptist Churches have still the right to call anyone they like to their ministry, whether on the accredited list or not, with one important proviso—provided they pay them themselves. The Recognition Committee is but the inevitable accompaniment of central endowments. The local Church can invite anyone it likes to minister to it, but it must realize that it has not the right to make anyone it wishes a beneficiary of Denominational funds, or to impose on the Denomination as a whole the responsibility for the permanent maintenance of its chosen. It is free to undertake what obligations it likes itself, but it is not free to pass on what obligations it likes to the Denomination as a whole. It will be seen, then, that in Baptist practice no question of validity of orders arises, the only question being, not whether a man is competent to minister, but whether the Denomination is sufficiently persuaded of his competence to undertake responsibility for his maintenance. A great gulf lies between that and the

proposition that only duly ordained men are competent to minister.

Are we to maintain, then, the inalienable right to minister of every individual who thinks he has a call to do so? There will be many who will be impatient of such a notion. Let us not be misunderstood. We do not say so. We cannot affirm that everyone who thinks he has a call to minister has a divine right to do so, but we may affirm that no one has a divine right to forbid him. He may or may not have a valid call from God. We cannot profess to determine infallibly.

II

Two things, then, seem clear. First, that the recognition of the Church—the Church's endorsement of a call from God—either through Bishops or otherwise, is not essential to a valid exercise of spiritual functions. And second, that the Church's recognition can only be reasonably expected when it has assured itself by some means, satisfactory to itself, but not infallible indeed, of the reality and validity of the call.

This may not seem to take us far, but both conclusions are important. We must endeavour to preserve the "liberty of prophesying"—a phrase susceptible, by the way, of two quite distinct meanings—while avoiding at the same time some of those tragedies which Baptists and Congregationalists could unfold of wholly illusory calls to minister, and also those tragedies of inefficiency

from which Churches with much more rigid control of the door of admission, and solemn ordinations with supposed communication of grace, too often suffer.

The office of Minister, as it exists to-day, is by no means a simple one—not nearly so simple as the man in the street imagines. The ministry is not at all the place for the "fool of the family." It requires gifts many and diverse. It calls for more than a ready tongue, and a smooth command of language, and ability to deliver an interesting address. Many people think only these things are called for. These are but the least of its requirements. It requires more than culture and scholarship, though most congregations nowadays expect their Minister to be the equal of his flock in culture, and to have some acquaintance with theological learning in its broad outlines. It requires very exceptional tact, and ability to understand and manage men. It requires courage and leadership, and a whole host of other qualities. But above all, it requires a vital inner experience. It requires a man who has seen God face to face and penetrated to the secrets of His heart, a man who is the friend of God.

Now how is such a Ministry to be secured? It is not a question merely of whether it is admitted by one form or another, or by no form at all, but of how it is to be discovered, trained and welcomed.

III

We shall best make the approach to this question if we first consider that we need men of very various types. The duties that to-day are required of a Minister are many and complex. No man can discharge them all equally well, and there is a growing number who feel that it is unreasonable to expect that any man shall be able to discharge them all at all. The Early Church did not concentrate all these functions in one individual, and it may well be that we shall feel the wisdom of returning in this particular to a more Apostolic practice—not, be it repeated, merely because it is Apostolic, but because it is wise. Certain it is that if we have one rigid type of test for all candidates for the ministry we shall not get the ministry we require, and we shall most certainly often quench the Spirit.

We require Evangelists—men of vital experience and living fervour, men of powerful and persuasive utterance, men who can be to their fellows the living embodiment in our day of the seeking love and call of the Heavenly Father. It is not necessary that these should be scholars. But a few things must be made clear. There are some who imagine that scholarship quenches evangelistic ardour, to whom it is axiomatic that a scholar cannot be an evangelist. This is by no means so axiomatic as they suppose, for the gifts of scholarship and evangelism may be found together. That the scholar is often not an evangelist is in no way

dishonourable, and we shall return to evaluate his services. The interesting thing is, however, that these same people who stoutly affirm that the scholar cannot be an evangelist, also seem to hold with some conviction that the evangelist is the scholar. An emphatic protest must be made against this notion that evangelistic zeal of itself imparts scholarship. The reason so many insist on some scholarship for all Ministers is that many a fervent evangelist enters the realm of scholarship with all the infallibility of ignorance and delivers judgement. Let him talk of his experience of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is on firm ground, and perchance the profoundest scholar can learn of him. But let him begin to discuss the authorship of the Books of the Bible, theories of inspiration, and theological speculation, and he is out of the realm of his experience, and dealing with matters for which he is in no way qualified or trained. There is an impression abroad that the greater a man's ignorance of these things, the more qualified he is to talk about them, but it is only by hard discipline that a man acquires the ability to discuss these things profitably. Let the evangelist be appointed for evangelistic work, and let it be quite clear that he is not appointed, *qua* evangelist, for anything else, and that he has no commission from the Church for it. His evangelistic gifts give him no title at all for it. We do not suggest that his mouth should be closed. We only suggest that it should be made clear that when he speaks on them he is not speaking as

a recognized Minister of the Church. As an evangelist he is recognized for evangelistic work, and for no other. Let us have an order of Evangelists—a separate and distinct order, an order to which perhaps the bulk of our ministry would count it an honour to be admitted. It is not suggested that it should be an inferior order to the order of scholars. No question of relative rank is here raised. It is only suggested that it should be different from the order of scholars, and that we should not confuse that difference by applying but one term to them both.

We need an order of Preachers or Teachers, quite apart from evangelists. We need preachers who can expound the Scriptures publicly and helpfully, who can minister to strong and healthy Christian growth, who can declare attractively and forcefully the plain, practical demands of our faith upon the ordinary life of men and women. Let us solemnly separate them unto the service of the Churches in this capacity.

We require Pastors, men who will shepherd the fold of God, who will visit the homes of the people, and who will be accessible to the people whenever their help and counsel are needed, men of wide and deep sympathy, who are able to enter into all the troubles and needs of another's heart, and to be the ministers of God's healing grace. Let this be a separate order, and let men be commissioned for this sacred task.

We require Prophets, men who will declare not so much the eternal message of God to the human

heart, but who will declare God's special message to their own generation, men who will interpret the mind of God to their fellows on all the public questions of their day. They will need to have the spirit and temper of the Hebrew prophets. They will need to be fearless and unashamed. They will need to be men who will be content to be lonely in this world, belonging ever to an unborn generation, and out of harmony with the spirit of their own age. They will find those things in the life of their day—political, international, social and industrial—which are at variance with the will of God, and they will speak in plain and courageous terms the mind of God. Probably they will not often be men of smooth speech. They may be rugged, and not very attractive. But they will be men of intense moral passion, men whose souls have been lighted and whose word is burning—both consuming and kindling. Let us have an order of Prophets. Yet no! It cannot be. For no prophet is honoured or recognized in his own age. He is always the lonesome figure, the voice in the wilderness, execrated in his own day, and honoured in a succeeding day. His tomb is built by those who are engaged in slaying his spiritual counterpart in their day. Probably the Church will never have the vision and the courage to acclaim her prophets, and if there is ever an order of Prophets it will be an exclusively posthumous order. Yet, be it well remembered, we need prophets, and whether we ordain them or not, they will be ordained of God.

We may now return to observe that we need an order of Scholars. If the Church requires Evangelists and Pastors and Teachers and Prophets, she also assuredly needs Scholars. Truth, Christian truth, is by no means wholly explored yet, and if there are some things which are only revealed to the babes and sucklings, some things which can only be given through immediate and intuitive experience of God, there are also many things which can only be given through hard mental discipline, and which are only revealed to the scholar. We need men who will patiently explore the Scriptures, making clear the exact meaning they bear, ascertaining, if possible, who wrote them, the circumstances from which they were born, and the text as it left the author's hands. We need men who will search the history of the Church, and who will preserve for us all that is vital in the message of that history. We need men who will study the great writings of the great Christians of former ages. We need men who will reflect with powerful and trained minds on the profound mysteries of our faith, endeavouring to bring them into ever clearer light. We need men who will go farther afield, who will study the truth that has been revealed to non-Christian peoples, to see what we can learn from them, what contributions they can make to the totality of truth, and also to see how best we can present our faith to them to win their allegiance. And so long as men's minds are assailed by doubts and fears, and enemies of our faith strive to under-

mine its foundations, we shall need scholars who will be charged with the task of the justification of the faith in the face of all that can be urged against it. Let us have, then, an order of Scholars—men who are set apart for this holy office. They will lay the whole Church under a constant debt to them, and their writings will be an inspiration and a help to Ministers of every order. It will be realized that we are not using the word scholar in its loose sense, but in its strictest sense. What is meant is not that every graduate Minister, nor even every Minister who has a Divinity degree, should be admitted to this order. There are many such who are not scholars. What is meant is that every man who has given evidence of genuine scholarship shall be admitted to it, every man who has shown that he has not merely mastered the facts of some branch of Christian learning, but that he has developed that judgment, that capacity to evaluate facts, which is the sure mark of the scholar, and that he is entitled to form and to express an independent judgment, which shall deserve the serious consideration of other scholars.

We need Organizers. We shall find some more euphonious term than that. Whether we find it in the New Testament or out of it matters little. Possibly we might call them Deacons. Organizers are needed in the local Church, and also for the great common activities of the Church. It is not often realized how large a part of a Minister's time is spent in organizing, or how many Ministers are devoting themselves exclusively to organization.

It is not realized how large a proportion of the Ministries that are hailed as successful depend almost entirely for their success on the Minister's organizing capacities, nor how large a proportion of the failures are such because the Minister has this one lack. It is common to make the Ministry the butt of ridicule, as though it knows nothing of business qualities, and as though all Ministers are necessarily "born fools" in "practical matters." One sometimes hears a Minister eulogized in the expression of the opinion that he would have made his mark in business. Probably the truth is that few classes have higher business qualities than the ministry, though they are commonly content to let the laymen of the Church have the credit for the successful organization which is carried on under the constant direction, inspiration and anxious care of the Minister himself. Business qualities are of very great importance in the service of the Church. Let them be recognized frankly in virtue of their own worth. Let us have an order of Organizers, set apart solemnly for the sacred task of Christian organization, and responsible for it. Do not let us regard this as a secular task. The organizers of most of our great Christian Societies are Ministers. Let this order be regarded as quite as definitely a Ministerial order as any other.

There is a doubt in some minds as to whether the Salvation Army should be included in the Reunited Church. Let us ask the question whether the Salvation Army is doing the work of the

Kingdom of God, and whether we believe that Salvationists are members of the Church Universal.[11] We can scarcely deny it. Then we must make a place for them in our Reunited Church, if we aim to make it worthy to be the one all-embracing Church. We must devise something such that all true Christians can be welcomed into it, while we shall not be anxious to welcome any others. Let the Salvationists, then, be gathered into the Reunited Church, if they are willing to come, and let them bring their distinctive contribution to it. We need work of their type—open air preaching, rescue work, social service. Let us constitute a separate order, qualified for work of this kind, and ordained for it, recognized and honoured by the whole Church.

We may find we shall need yet other orders. We shall return in a subsequent chapter to another highly important order that we shall certainly require, and others may subsequently emerge. But these at any rate we need. Let them all be distinct, with clearly defined functions, all duly appointed, all solemnly set apart, all held in honour and esteem.

Some questions will still arise. Every local Church needs most of these varieties of ministry, yet it cannot be supposed that they will all be able to have the full-time services of each of these types of Minister. Shall we not find ourselves in serious difficulty? On examination our difficulty will not prove so great as appears. No Church needs the full time service of the Prophet. It soon wearies

of him. Besides, there are not enough of him to go round. In any age there are but a few of him. The Prophets will exercise a more detached ministry, visiting the Churches with their message and fire, but themselves belonging to the whole body, not to the local Church. It will probably be sufficient if the Evangelist is attached to a group of Churches, frequently visiting with his vital and essential appeal each Church. We do not mean for series of "Mission" Meetings. We think it is well for every Church frequently to have the message of the Evangelist delivered in its ordinary services, and we would have a man whose special gift is for this kind of work serving a group of Churches, and the group should not be a large one.[12] The Pastor and the Preacher or Teacher will be the types most required in every Church that has a settled ministry. These are needed all the time and everywhere. The Organizer, too, will be required, though in many cases only in an elementary capacity, and it would be sufficient in many cases to have an adviser to a group of Churches, acting in this capacity. The function of the Scholar is different, and he will not be required as such at all in the local Church.

It may be objected that a cumbrous and elaborate organization is being suggested, and it may be asked where the money is coming from to maintain at least two whole-time Ministers in each Church, together with a whole host of Ministers attached to the group or the whole. The objection is without weight. We to-day have all these types

of ministry. It is only suggested that they be separately recognized, instead of being recognized under a common term that obscures the differences, and leads men to expect that because a Minister is competent in one capacity he ought to be in another. Moreover, it may suggest itself to some that Reunion might effect a considerable reduction in the number of Churches, and that the resources might then be equal to all that so far appears to be proposed. It will be remembered that many Churches to-day, especially in the Establishment, have more than one Minister, and it would be neither more expensive nor more cumbrous in such cases to have men of different types associated, each with distinct aspects of the Church's life committed to his care, rather than to have one a weak replica or the servant of the other. But there is a further consideration. While we maintain that it is unreasonable to expect that every Minister should be Pastor, Teacher, Evangelist, Organizer, Scholar, Prophet, and what not besides, as is too commonly the case at present, there is no reason whatever why one person should not belong to more than one of these orders, provided he has duly satisfied whatever authority shall be established of his fitness for each several order to which he belongs, and provided he has been specifically set apart to each one. Many men might combine two orders. Some would combine more. The Pastor and the Teacher would often be found together in the one man, and the Evangelist and the Teacher would also be fre-

quently combined. Moreover, there is no need for every Minister to be a full-time servant of the Church. There is no ground whatever for the impression that if a man gets his living in a secular calling, he cannot also be a Minister. Many a man in Holy Orders is engaged in teaching, though teaching as such is not regarded as a sacred calling. He is in Holy Orders, though he may be rendering no direct service to the Church at all. If a man is actually ministering in some real way to the Church, even though he be giving but a part of his time, and serving in an honorary capacity, he has as good a claim to the recognition of his orders as men who are giving no time. There is in particular no reason why some of the organizers should not be but part-time servants of the Church, with or without remuneration, especially in the case of a group of Churches having an expert advising organizer to help the local organizers. But let them all prove their fitness for this office, and let them be regarded not as laymen, distinct from the Ministry, but as being just as truly Ministers as any.

IV

Having now gained some idea of the kinds of Minister we require, let us return to the question we asked above. How is such a Ministry to be secured? It is clear that it cannot be secured by any one type of test—certainly not by one type of examination. Each order would have its own

characteristic tests of fitness, which would be determined and applied by its own admitting Board. It need hardly be added that in every case spiritual fitness would be inquired into. Only such men could be ordained, whatever their other gifts, as gave evidence of strong and rich Christian character, and a real passion to give themselves to the service of the Church and her Lord. Each order would conduct its own Training Institutions, to prepare its own recruits, unless perhaps the various orders should combine to form larger Institutions. It should be clear, however, that candidates ought not to be required to pass through particular Institutions in order to be accepted as candidates for orders. A man may pursue Christian Scholarship quite apart from an Ecclesiastical Institution and be a distinguished scholar in some branch—as, for instance, Dr. T. Reaveley Glover. He should be recognized as such by the Church. A man may be a fine Evangelist without a Collegiate training. He must be recognized as such. Another may be a trained and ordained Pastor, and subsequently qualify himself for ordination as a Teacher. Every man should be recognized in virtue of what he is, not of where he has been trained, though the provision of suitable opportunities of training is of fundamental importance.

But where is a man to develop, say, his preaching or evangelistic gifts? He must give evidence of the possession of them before he is ordained, and therefore there must be oppor-

tunities of preaching and evangelism for unordained men. There are some who will recall with alarm the quality of much of the lay preaching from which many of the Nonconformist Churches suffer, forgetting the really high quality of much of it, and giving scant appreciation to the devoted service and real sacrifice of very many earnest men. Men who feel they have the gift of preaching in them, and who claim to have heard the call of God to preach, must be given the opportunity to exercise it. Not indeed without limits. If after a certain probation their gift does not commend itself to those who are best qualified to judge, and they do not seem likely to become effective and acceptable preachers, they must not be given continued opportunities. But if they do approve themselves, let their gift be recognized and let them be ordained to their task. If they belonged to the class at present deemed laymen, continuing to gain their living in a secular calling, and giving but occasional services to the Church, they would naturally belong to a different branch of the preaching orders from more qualified workers who had more fully approved themselves to the admitting Board, and were commended to the wider service of the Church.[13]

We have said above that while every man who feels he has a call to minister cannot be allowed to have a divine right to do so, neither can we allow that any has a divine right to forbid him. Are we not inconsistent in now urging that men who, after certain probation, do not commend

themselves as suitable to minister should no longer be allowed to do so? Scarcely. None can expect that the Church should deliberately give opportunities to minister to men who in its considered judgment are unfitted to do so. The listeners as well as the preacher have to be considered. It may yet be that God has called him to be a preacher. But he will then humbly and earnestly seek some other door whereby to respond to the call. He may, for instance, find some place which is not being reached by others, and conduct perhaps open air services, until by his zeal and persistence and growing power and effective service he compels that recognition which has been withheld. On both sides there should be a spirit of humility and consideration and sympathy.

V

The admitting Board should have a wider function than merely critical or sifting. They should not merely test the applications made to them by men who feel that they are called to the ministry. They should seek such. Many Churches lament the falling off in recent years of the numbers of candidates for the ministry. It may confidently be affirmed that many have been lost through avoidable causes. Some have known too little of "the ropes"—have wanted to go to College, but have not known quite what step to take. Some have not had enough money at the age when they ought to have gone. Some have

had enough, but have been afraid they had not. Many with a little encouragement and interest and advice would have gone, and the ministry might have been enriched by their presence. Let the admitting Board endeavour to get into touch with suitable candidates for the Ministry as early as possible, giving them advice and guidance in their preparation to enter on a course of definite training.

The Home Preparation Unions of some of the Missionary Societies are fine pioneers in this line. All young people in the Churches who entertain the hope of foreign service are encouraged to join the Union. They are put into touch with some person, sometimes a Minister, sometimes not, chosen in any case because of special suitability for this kind of work, who has a group of not more than half a dozen students, whose Tutor he—or she—is. The Tutor conducts a correspondence course, according to a given syllabus, designed to cultivate habits of study, and to fix and foster the missionary purpose. The Tutor is expected to be more than a Tutor in an educational sense, and to be also a friend to those in his circle, getting to know them, if only by letters, and counselling and guiding them, and later, if they prove to be suitable, helping them to get into training institutions. He has to report on their progress and prospective fitness for the work they hope to undertake. The course is very simple at first, and not designed to frighten those who may not have acquired, or have lost, the habits of serious study. But gradually it becomes harder, and makes greater

demands on the student. It happens, of course, that very many students drop out after a time. Many realize with growing clearness that they have mistaken the call, and that while God means them to have a great interest in His work abroad, and perhaps to serve that work very effectively from home, He does not call them to foreign service. The time they have given to study is not wasted. It may have helped them to a more intelligent grasp of some things, and it may have given to them a deeper interest in the work, an interest that will assuredly bear fruit in many ways. There seems no reason why some such work should not be done amongst those who hold the desire to enter the service of Christ at home.

A further suggestion may be made. Some years ago a Church—it was a Baptist Church—passed a resolution placing on record its profound conviction that one of its younger members was called to the Ministry, and calling on him to give serious consideration to the question of whether he was thus called. At the time he had not thought of entering the ministry, and was engaged in University study in Economics. Needless to say, after that he did very seriously consider the question. He has not entered the ministry in the ordinarily accepted sense, and he does not style himself "Rev.", but he is to-day a full-time servant of the Christian Church, and as truly a Minister as anyone. Other Churches may have passed such resolutions. They should be encouraged to pass them if they have young men of promise in their

midst—not to pass them lightheartedly and casually, of course, but in solemn responsibility. Such resolutions should be communicated not alone to the person concerned, but also to the admitting Board, which would then seek to get into touch with him, and to explore with him God's will for him.

It seems a pity that in most of the discussions of the ministry of the Reunited Church hitherto, attention has been absorbed by the question of the manner of the admission, and these other questions have been left with little or no mention. If the Reunited Church is to be a more vital power in the world, real thought must be given to the types of service that our age requires, how men may be set free for their special form of service, how we may best dispose our forces, and how the ranks of our workers are to be recruited. The Church must realize that these are of fundamental importance to her, of vastly more importance than the controversy on Reordination. Let us put first things first, and we may find that it will be far easier to reach agreement subsequently on the things that divide us.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

In discussing the Ministry in the previous chapter no mention was made of work amongst children. This was because it was felt that the subject was of sufficient importance to claim a separate chapter. It is true that it does not figure much in discussions of Reunion, but it is also true that few ministries are more utterly sacred than that to the children, which should receive far more consideration and recognition than it has yet had. And if Reunion is to herald not merely a bigger Church, but a better Church, one more nearly in line with the Ideal Church for our day, then we shall need to see that the Sunday School, as well as other aspects of our work and witness, is re-examined and re-established.

I

The Sunday School was a pioneer of popular education. It came into existence at a time when opportunities of education did not exist for the masses, and it brought to many their first chance of learning to read and write. These secular functions have now been taken from it, and a system of public education set up which, while far

from perfect, is yet vastly more efficient than that of the Sunday School. The unfortunate thing is that the Churches, since their Sunday Schools have been limited to a religious function, have not studied efficiency to any remarkable degree, and have made scant advance in that direction. They might learn much from the public educational system.

Many things strike every observer. There is absolutely no demand that a Sunday School teacher should be qualified for his task. Many of our Sunday School teachers are not even openly professed Christians. They are teaching a religion to which they have not definitely committed themselves. It is undeniable that many of them are careless of their duties, and do not in fact take them seriously. Many have no teaching gifts whatever, and the Sunday School under their direction is a farce. Yet it may be urged that they are the best material available, that they are the only ones who are willing to do the work, and that if any suggestion were made to them that there was room for improvement, they would decline to work at all. We may also be reminded that all teachers are not of this kind, and we shall gladly acknowledge that there are many teachers who are rendering fine and efficient service, and whose hearts burn with the passion of love to the children and the purpose of service. Nevertheless the conditions which we have outlined are widely found, and are a serious menace to the Sunday School.

To many it is axiomatic that this condition of things imperatively needs attention, and some are rendering heroic service in trying to introduce a better and a more efficient regime. They realize that if the teacher is inefficient it is because we have never trained him. If he is careless it is because we, too, have been careless. They realize that if no better material is available, it is because the Churches have never set themselves seriously to seek or create it. But it is not sufficient to leave the campaign for the improvement of the Sunday School to individuals or to the voluntary societies. The Church should realize that the Sunday School is its concern. We mean that the Church as a whole should realize it, not merely that the local Church should take an interest in its own Sunday School. The Church as a whole has as great a responsibility for its Sunday Schools and for their condition as it has for any other branch of the Church's life and work. That responsibility should be openly and fully admitted, and officially shouldered.

II

Let us consider some aspects of the matter. We may realize in the first place that the teacher in the Sunday School is a Minister of the Church. His office is a holy one—as holy as the office of any. Let us have, then, an order of Sunday School Workers, different from the orders of preachers and evangelists, but as real and as sacred and as

truly recognized. We shall admit to full membership of the order such as have been through some training—which the Church will need to provide—or such as have given some other sufficient evidence of a call to teach and of fitness and capacity for the work. Needless to say, if they are to be admitted to the Ministry, they must have already committed themselves utterly to the Lord Jesus.

We should not be able to demand, however, that only ordained workers should be allowed to teach in the Sunday School. For the present, of course, there would be far from a sufficiency in every Church, and probably there would never be a sufficiency in many. We should therefore welcome "Pupil Teachers" particularly for work amongst the tiny children. It might not be necessary to require that these should all be members of the Church, though it would be well for them to be members, and probably most of them would become such at an early date after taking up the work. They would be definitely committed not only to teaching, but also to training with a view to becoming later fully ordained teachers. Even this would probably far from meet our need. We should have to have a place for "Supplementary Teachers," not fully ordained, nor even expecting to be or contemplating full ordination. At first our requirements of this grade of teacher would not have to be very advanced, but probably if there were a definite ideal of efficiency inspiring the whole system, that would be gradually improved. We

might begin by requiring right away of every person recognized as qualified for regular teaching as a Supplementary Teacher—it is not suggested that these terms would be the most desirable—that he should be a full member of the Church, and should have shown some ability to hold the interest and attention of the children. There would still have to be room for occasional teaching by persons who did not belong to any of these grades or orders.

In addition we need Sunday School "experts," men and women who have studied Sunday School methods and problems very thoroughly, and who can visit the Churches, holding Teachers' Conferences and giving advice and help in facing the particular problems of the local School. It might be possible to attach one of these experts to a group of Churches—say to a Diocese, if Dioceses were sufficiently small—and to charge him with some definite responsibility for the condition of the Schools.

We should need also a National Sunday School Board, charged with responsibility for the Schools of the whole Church, regulating admission to orders, exploring new avenues of service and efficiency. This Board would probably draw up schemes of lessons to be used in the Sunday Schools, and would issue to all the Schools such helps for the teachers in the preparation of their lessons as it felt desirable. An immense amount of good could be done by such a Board, existing, not as the Advisory Council of a voluntary Society,

but established by the whole Church, responsible to the Church, and definitely charged with responsibility for the Schools. It would keep a watch on the staffing of the Schools, and if it found that in some Schools there was a serious lack of qualified teachers, it would inquire into the reason, to see if it was due to remediable causes. In countless ways it could render invaluable service.

III

Hitherto we have used the term Sunday School as being the most convenient. Yet our need is for something wider than the Sunday School. We need to do something for the children between the Sundays. In many of our towns the children spend a great deal of their time in the streets all through the week, and the Churches can render fine service by winning their interest and turning it into useful channels. In many of our Churches there are Bands of Hope, Christian Endeavour Societies, Guilds, Children's Choirs, Boys' Brigades, Church Lads' Brigades, Boy Scouts, Wolf Cubs, Girl Guides, Brownies, Girls' Life Brigades, Home Fire Girls, and what not. But not all our Churches realize the importance of work of this kind, and so much of it is haphazard. Our National Board should also have charge of this kind of work, and should consider the best forms of week-day activities amongst the children for the various types of Church that exist. They should render very definite assistance to the Churches in estab-

lishing work of this kind. At present the Churches do not relate the claims of one type of organization to another. Each organization desires to be represented in as many Churches as possible, and presses its claims to be regarded as the best suited to every Church, and one or other is often established under the immediate pressure of some Society. Something more statesmanlike is required, and the expert adviser attached to the group or Diocese could find a wide sphere of usefulness here.

It need scarcely be added that the workers along these lines, who are caring for the children during the week, and training them, are also Ministers, and should be recognized as such. Let a place be found for them amongst the orders of children's workers.

IV

It will be objected that all this is an unnecessary multiplication of orders, and that at this rate the whole Church would soon be in orders of one kind or another, and there would be no laity. It would be very fortunate for the Church if that could be so, for she would be getting near to an ideal state. If every member had solemnly dedicated himself or herself to some form of service, were really qualified for it after careful preparation, and had been solemnly set apart unto it, we should have a Church full of irresistible power. It is only suggested that we should recognize fully and

frankly all service that is rendered to the Church, or, to be more precise, to the Church's Lord, and that it should all be acknowledged to be sacred, and should be more carefully regulated than it now is. A dignity would be given to all forms of service that is too often lacking. Why should we be afraid of the "universal priesthood of all believers" if it denotes some real service? Why should we be afraid to say that every member is engaged in sacred tasks if it is indeed the case? Moreover, it is not suggested that equal position or authority in the Church should be given to the members of every order. Each would have authority appropriate to its own gifts and its own tasks. It would exercise its authority within its own clearly defined sphere. Each would be honoured for the reality and worth of its own service. All would not be held in equal honour, but those who would have the greatest honour would be those who were rendering the service which in fulness, wealth and importance compelled that honour. "He that would be the greatest among you shall be the servant of all."

CHAPTER V

THE SACRAMENTS

WE turn next to deal with the subject of the Sacraments. We are here once more upon a subject which has come into some prominence in the discussions, and on which considerable disagreement exists. We must endeavour to approach it without prejudices, and if we would reach a common conclusion, we must examine all our premises and assumptions.

I

We are told in the Report issued by the Conference between representatives of the Church of England and the Federal Council of the Free Churches that the observance of the two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself has since the days of the Apostles been one of the necessary visible and recognizable marks of the Church.[14] We can but rub our eyes when we read it. How any Nonconformist can have agreed to such a statement passes comprehension. It is a declaration that the Society of Friends is not a part of the Church of Christ. It is perhaps not sur-

prising that Anglicans should be unwilling to recognize their Churchmanship. Until but recently the Churchmanship of all Nonconformists was denied, and it is little wonder that there should be rather more reluctance to revise that judgement in the case of the Friends. But that Nonconformists should deny the Churchmanship of the Friends is extraordinary. Few bodies have a finer record of Christian service, or a higher standard of Christian life than the Society of Friends, and if the whole Church were as pure and as faithful as that Society, she would be in an incomparably happier position than she finds herself in to-day. The Quaker has realized that the Christian Religion is an inner and spiritual one, and that the possession of a vital experience of God through Jesus Christ cannot be determined by rites and ceremonies. If the Friends have the inner experience—as none can deny—if Christ dwells in their midst and blesses them with His fellowship we are false to Him in repudiating them. The Friends assuredly have as high a title as any to be regarded as members of the true Church of Jesus Christ, and if they are willing to come into the Reunited Church, we should welcome them with the very distinctive contribution they have to bring. If our theory of Churchmanship excludes them then it stands condemned, and the sooner we change it for a truer one the better.[15]

We may turn to another aspect of the question. The statement is a model of loose thinking. Apparently the Baptist members of the Conference

were not able to make effective protest against it. It is to be assumed that they disagreed. For since when have Baptists agreed that the sprinkling of infants was "ordained by Christ Himself"? What reasons can be adduced in support of such a contention? That a rite of Baptism was ordained by Christ is arguable. That a rite bearing the name of Baptism has been almost universal in the Church is undeniable. But it is a grave confusion to declare that these two rites are one, and that the rite so widely practised is the rite ordained by Christ. The mere application of a common name to them does not identify them.

II

The whole of the ground need not be here traversed, but in the interests of clear thinking and of the prospects of Reunion one or two things must be said. In the New Testament Baptism followed repentance. The call was "Repent and be baptized." Baptism was defined as the Baptism of repentance. It signified renunciation of the past, and self dedication for the future. An unconscious infant cannot repent, cannot renounce the past, cannot pledge itself for the future, and is therefore an unfit subject for Baptism. The word "baptize" means "to dip" or "to immerse," and cannot rightly signify sprinkling. It is only confusion to use an untranslated word to disguise the difference. It is certain that Baptism was originally by immersion. If nothing else made

it clear, Paul's reference in the sixth chapter of his letter to the Romans does, where he calls Baptism a burial and resurrection—a metaphor that is singularly appropriate to a symbolic immersion, but which has no relevance to a sprinkling. Immersion aptly symbolizes the significance which the New Testament attaches to the rite—death to the past, resurrection to newness of life. Neither in mode nor in subject can Infant Sprinkling be accepted as the Baptism that Christ ordained, nor is any instance recorded in the New Testament of the Baptism of infants, either in the lifetime of Christ Himself, or in the Apostolic Age. It can only be by sheer assumption that the later practice of the Church is read back into the New Testament.

It is an arguable position that the sacrament of Baptism ordained by Christ is binding on all Christians. In that case let those who maintain it return to Christ's ordinance. It is also an arguable position that for sufficient reasons some other ordinance has been substituted for Christ's ordinance by large sections of the Church. But it is unpardonable to profess belief in the necessity for adhering to Christ's ordinance, while substituting another for it. It is also unpardonable to claim liberty to set Christ's ordinance at nought provided something quite different and unrelated, save in the name that is applied to it, is substituted in its stead, while at the same time excommunicating the Quakers for setting His ordinance at nought, without this substitution. This

is not to exalt the authority of Christ's ordinance, but to claim a superior authority to His.

Let us have absolute honesty, and absolutely clear thinking. Either let us return to the original Baptism and adhere to Christ's ordinance, or let us frankly admit that we are departing from His ordinance, and that therefore the whole ground on which we say that Baptism is a necessary mark of the true Church is cut from under our feet. We cannot build the Ideal Church on loose thinking any more than we can on blind prejudice. We must recognize that practically the whole Church has existed for centuries without the Baptism of Christ's ordinance, and that therefore this is in no sense a test of the true Church, unless we are to deny the Churchmanship of all the Pædobaptist Churches. There are, of course, many Baptists, especially the Strict Baptists, who do not hesitate to make this denial, and who unchurch at one sweep not only the Quakers, but practically the whole of Christendom. Any theory which leads us to such absurdities should be quickly buried, and if our reading of the New Testament leads us to adopt it, the quicker we realize that our reading of that Book must be wrong the better. To those with a rigid theory of orders which they make an absolute test of Churchmanship, and to those with a rigid theory of Baptism, who deny the Churchmanship of all but the communities of immersed believers, we must clearly and emphatically say "Ye know not what Spirit ye are of." The Christian Religion

is a spiritual faith, given in living experience, and it can neither be judged nor fettered by such theories. But if the Pædobaptists regard this unchurching of them as pure bigotry and blind prejudice, let them not be guilty of the same bigotry and prejudice in their attitude to the Friends, and with less reason, since they themselves share the very error with which they charge them.

III

Are we, then, advocating the dropping of the sacrament of Baptism? Are we urging that the ordinance of Christ is of no account? We repeat that if we were, we should be doing no more than almost the whole Church has done in its practice throughout nearly all its history. But we are not. Let us go back to our foundations. Are we assuming anything in our use of the phrase "the ordinance of Christ"? Are we very sure that He did ordain any of the things we call Baptism? In the first place, while it is undeniable that He took over the rite of Baptism from John the Baptist, and administered it through the hands of his disciples to the wider company of His followers, He nowhere declared that every follower *must* be baptized, or that without it He would disown them. Whenever we are told the marks whereby Christ will recognize His own at the Last Day, they appear to be different. He even assured the Penitent Thief of his salvation, though

he was unbaptized. It must be insisted that it is contrary to the essentially spiritual genius of the Christian faith to make the test of the possession of the inner experience the undergoing of an external rite. But further, we may remember that the Baptism of water was declared to be but the forerunner of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was of greater authority and importance. May not Christ have meant, when He told His disciples to baptize all nations, that the Baptism they were to carry with them, when once the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, was to be the Baptism of the Holy Ghost? Was He even thinking of a sacrament at all? Did He not rather mean that one loving soul was to set another on fire? [16] Certain it is that in the early days the Apostles did carry the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with them. It is true that they also laid emphasis on the Baptism of water, and it is apparent that they felt they were obeying the Master in doing so. May this not have been one of their mistakes? They made many mistakes. For instance, Jesus said He was coming again very soon. The Early Church was convinced that He would in their day reappear in the flesh. They were mistaken. Either, then, Jesus deceived them, which few of us would allow, or He made a mistake in the date, which again we cannot allow, or we are limited to the conclusion that they misunderstood Him. Was it that He did actually return in fulfilment of His promise, but that it was a spiritual return and not a physical—a returning in

the Holy Spirit? May it not have been that the disciples were similarly mistaken in not seeing that the spiritual Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the real Christian Baptism, as announced indeed by John the Baptist himself, and that it was intended to supersede the Baptism of water, which was but its forerunner? Such a view would save us from the unchurching, under the presumed authority of Christ, of many who have had all the inner and spiritual marks of the Kingdom upon them. In any case the Apostles and their contemporaries were in no doubt as to the relative importance of the Baptism of water and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. They insisted indeed on the double Baptism. When Paul found a community in Ephesus which had grown up under the leadership of Apollos, practising the rite of the Baptism of water, he did not reckon it a true Church till it had also received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.[17] And if it be said that on quite other grounds they could not be accounted a Christian Church, it may be replied that the same necessity for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was felt in relation to the Church in Samaria.[18] The Early Church had two Baptisms, and the one they accounted the more important, the one which is declared on the first page of the earliest Gospel to be the more characteristic of Christ, is now relegated to a secondary place. It is not even declared to be one of the marks of the true Church. It is not referred to in connection with the term Baptism.

Are we, then, taking just a Quaker position, and proposing the abolition of water Baptism from the Church's practice? By no means. There is another position, which is taken by large sections of the Baptist Church. It holds with the Friends that water Baptism is not of the *esse* of Christianity, but it further holds that it is of the *bene esse*. It rightly sees that an outer ceremony cannot be held vital to an inner faith, but it believes that the outer ceremony may be of value in many ways as a symbolic expression of that inner faith. It does not make the outer ceremony compulsory for all its members. That is to declare that it is indispensable to the inner faith. It feels, indeed, that it has greater worth and weight as a voluntary act. It finds in the Baptism by water of professed believers a vivid symbol of the inner experience, which may help to fix and strengthen that inner experience. It attaches to submission to this rite the significance of a holy vow of consecration, and it finds in its public and impressive and vivid character a testimony that is of the highest value. While allowing that Christ may not have ordained this rite, and made it binding on every believer, and while affirming most emphatically that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the essential Baptism, may we not hold that the Baptism of water has a real and useful significance, and that men may wisely be encouraged to submit to it, even though we are not entitled to make it an absolute demand of them? But if we are to retain any rite which we call by the name of the Baptism of water,

can it be seriously disputed that it ought to be, both as to its fitting subjects, its mode of administration, the experience it rests on and symbolises, and the significance that is attached to it, the rite which Jesus Himself administered through His disciples in the days of His flesh, and which both He and His disciples underwent?

IV

But what of Infant Baptism? If we are to maintain that while Christ may not have ordained Believers' Baptism by water as binding on the Church, it may yet be wisely retained and usefully employed, are we not equally justified in saying that though Infant Baptism does not appear in the New Testament or in Apostolic practice, yet it has been employed with profit in the Church, and it holds a significance which is too valuable to be lost. On this ground something may be said for it; on the ground of Christ's ordinance nothing. There will of course be some inveterate opponents of Infant Baptism who will find it hard to overcome their prejudice against this unscriptural rite to the extent of even considering its claims, but on both sides we need a spirit of inquiry, and a readiness to accept whatever conclusions we are led to by an unbiased examination. It must be our aim to preserve in the Reunited Church all that is vital and useful in the contribution of every Church, and we must be ready to ask why Infant Baptism has found such a place in the

Church's esteem and practice, and how we can continue to minister to every true instinct to which it has appealed.

It is undeniable that it is a sound instinct of the religious heart to take the newborn child to the feet of God, to thank Him for the precious gift and sacred trust, to dedicate the little life to Him, and to vow over it to rear it in the nurture and fear of the Lord, and so to live that the little one shall grow up easily and naturally in the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God. It may be useful to remember the example of Christ's own history in this respect. He was not baptized as an infant, but He was presented in the Temple of God. A place for something of this kind most certainly ought to be found in the Reunited Church, and it is significant that the Baptists are increasingly feeling the need for it, and introducing Dedication services. Something more than the dedication of the infant is required, however. Let it be a "Sacrament," and be it remembered that the word sacrament originally signified a soldier's vow of obedience. Let this ceremony be a vow, only not a vow on the child's part—that it cannot be—but a solemn vow on the part of those presenting the child. Let it be realized that it is not the child to whom the sacrament is being administered, but the parents or guardians who present the child. It should involve consequences for the child, blessed consequences if the vows undertaken are fulfilled, and we shall later return to those consequences. But it cannot be held

that it lays obligations of any kind on the child.

Two things still require to be said. *First*, this sacrament should not be called Baptism. That but tends to confusion of thought. It bears no recognizable relation in any respect to the Baptism by water of the New Testament. It is entirely different, and its difference should not be obscured by the application of the same name to it. It is not suggested that the name Dedication is satisfactory. It is not. It calls attention to one aspect in particular of its significance, and inevitably gives the impression that it is the only aspect. Perhaps the Sacrament of the Presentation would be a more satisfactory term—the term associated with our Lord's own first bringing by His parents to the feet of Him from Whom He came. *Second*, the sacrament should not be made binding and compulsory. A true Christianity has existed without it, and may still exist. It may be of the *bene esse* of Christianity ; it is not of the *esse*. And while Christians may wisely be encouraged to adhere to this sacrament, they must not be excommunicated if they do not. There is no sufficient authority, either from our Lord's commands or from the New Testament, or from Apostolic practice or injunction, or from the essential genius of our faith, to make this sacrament one of the indispensable marks of Churchmanship.

V

We must pass on to the other sacrament for which the claim is also made that it is an

indispensable mark of the true Church. Less disagreement has gathered round this, as the vehemence of the Baptists has not been called forth in the same way. The Quakers are less aggressive, and the Salvationists are more concerned with evangelism than controversy ; and as the rest of the Church observes the Lord's Supper, it may appear that we shall sooner reach agreement here. But it is by no means so sure. We must ask once more for clear and unbiased thinking. If we have found that the one sacrament insisted on is in none of its forms indispensable, we may entertain an *à priori* doubt as to whether the other is indispensable. We may feel convinced that this outer mark is not likely to be the inevitable consequence of a living faith—that indeed there is no outer rite which can be the unfailing mark of an inner experience, save such as springs spontaneously out of its own essence. And it cannot be maintained that the redeemed heart would spontaneously feel that it was driven to eat a morsel of bread and to drink a drop of wine from time to time. Further, the Quakers are here again a living testimony that a vital faith can exist without the sacrament, and that it is not, in plain and simple fact, an inevitable mark of the true Church. Moreover, here again a variety of ceremonies are covered by a common term, and inconsistent significances are attached to them, though the differences are not commonly so manifest as in the case of Baptism. Can it be pretended that the mere symbolical eating of the

bread and drinking of the wine are the essential things, and that the spirit in which it is done, the message it brings, the experience it symbolises are of no account?

It may be retorted that we have yet to explore just what form this sacrament should take, just what form the Reunited Church will adopt, and what significance shall be attached to it. All that is now in question is that there shall be a sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or of the Eucharist, or of Holy Communion, or of High Mass, or of some name that shall be agreed upon. And can it be denied here that Christ did ordain some such sacrament? Do not the Gospels give long and detailed accounts of its institution, and is not the very length of their account itself a clear proof of the importance they attached to it in the early days? Are not the Quakers here manifestly at fault? Not quite so manifestly as is supposed. It is natural that the Evangelists should dwell long and lovingly on all the incidents of that last and memorable night, and should think with peculiar affection of every detail of the Master's last meal with His disciples. We must remember that the Eleven were in some way or other the source of all the Gospels, and these memories would be sacred to them. But we are nowhere told that Christ ordained this as a permanent service to be repeated from time to time in the corporate life of the Church. Had He so ordained it we might have expected some guidance as to how often it should be resorted to, and the wide

differences of view that prevail on this question might have been spared us. To-day some think it is enough if they present themselves at the Lord's Table once a year, while others think that a weekly or even daily resort to it is necessary.

But our accuracy will be called in question. It will be retorted "What! We are not told that Christ ordained this as a service to be repeated from time to time in the corporate life of the Church! Did He not say 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup'? Does not this imply a frequent repetition?" Yes, it may reasonably be concluded that Jesus contemplated that His disciples would frequently eat bread and drink wine. It is not self evident that He was thinking of any but those who were in the room with Him at the time. It is by no means clear that He was thinking only of corporate eating and drinking, nor that He was thinking at all of a *merely* symbolic eating and drinking. May He not have meant "As often as ye eat bread and drink wine—yea, as often as ye eat and drink—let the broken pieces and the poured out beverage be to you a symbol and a reminder of the slain body and the shed blood of your Lord"? May He not have been thinking of a spirit of remembrance which should enter into the warp and woof of common experience? Surely it would be an incalculable gain if every Christian had that spirit, and if the common experience of daily life were to them a perpetual reminder of their Lord, if every meal were to them a sacrament, a renewed pledge of

loyalty and a genuine communion with Christ. It may be replied that while that is very true and very beautiful, it cannot have been what Christ meant, for He specified so carefully wine and bread, limiting so expressly His meaning. That limitation does not appear. If bread and wine were to be the reminders of His sacrifice, it is no necessary conclusion that they were to be the only reminders. They might well be but typical reminders. But could anything else be so appropriate? Is not wine a remarkably apt symbol of shed blood? Yes, but is bread an equally apt symbol of the "broken body" of Christ? Is bread a remarkable symbol of flesh, and is the breaking of bread into fragments a specially apt symbol of the "breaking" that Christ's body suffered? May it not have been that bread and wine were mentioned because they were present and because they were amongst the commonest articles of diet, and therefore thoroughly typical? It was not to be something occasional and isolated, but something belonging to the very essence of the common round of life, something that should penetrate ordinary daily experience, that should speak of His dying.

VI

We may approach the subject from another point of view. The ceremony as at present practised in all our Churches, while many people seem to think it is a repetition of Christ's Last Supper

with His disciples, is really nothing of the kind. It is but a mutilation of it. In many Churches it is remembered that "after supper they sang a hymn," and with punctilious precision the hymn is included, as though it were an essential part of the service, and it would be a serious disregard of the original Supper to omit it. It is forgotten that before the hymn Jesus and His disciples ate a proper meal, and not merely a symbolic fragment of bread together with a symbolic sip of wine. Of course, it may be said that a full meal would be quite out of the question to-day in our Churches, but it is not without interest to observe that those whose appeal is always to the authority of Apostolic practice in the matter of Church organization—a practice on which there is very little certainty—do not often feel that there is any authority in the Apostolic practice in the matter of the observance of this sacrament. If their system of Church organization makes impossible the Apostolic practice, they have no hesitation in changing the practice, rather than change their Church organization. For, be it observed, the Early Church felt that the meal was of the essence of the memorial, and for a long time "the breaking of bread" meant to them the actual partaking of a common meal. Abuse was not unknown, as we learn, for instance, from Paul's letters to the Corinthian Church, and the inconvenience of a full meal or its abuse later compelled it to be discontinued, only the symbolic fragment being retained. But if we are free to alter and adapt, retaining

this and dropping that, why may we not drop all?

We may digress to observe that it would be well for many things if a full meal could be restored. Fellowship over a meal, not merely the silent fellowship of our present Communion services, but the normal and natural fellowship around a common board, would bring a breath of helpfulness into many of our Churches. Fellowship is one of our greatest lacks, and there are many members of our Churches who not only do not as a matter of fact, but who would not as a matter of prejudice, admit some of their fellow members to their own table, and probably would not sit with them at a common table for any real meal. It is no use talking about the "Lord's Table" as a cant phrase. Let us attach some full meaning to it if we believe in it, and if we believe that the Master welcomes us all to His table and is not ashamed to sit with us, let us have none of that pride and arrogance of spirit that would scorn to admit our fellow members to our own table—that spirit which is not merely the absence of fellowship, but its denial. It is not that it is possible to be on terms of "eating fellowship" with all our fellow members, especially in the larger Churches. But we can be rid of that pride of heart which would feel any incongruity in such fellowship, and we can see to it that if we do celebrate the Lord's Supper, believing that in any genuine sense we have fellowship there with our Lord, it must stand equally for a genuine spirit

of fellowship with one another. The spirit of pride and the consciousness of superiority were explicitly rebuked by Christ at that very meal which we are supposed to be repeating, and it is utterly vain to retain a mutilated fragment of the Last Supper, to gather to it in the spirit which is the very antithesis of the spirit of fellowship, and the spirit withal which the Master so expressly rebuked, and to persuade ourselves that *therefore* the mark of the true Church is upon us. The marks of the Church are inner. Let that truth burn into our hearts till it has consumed all these false notions for ever.

VII

Again, it may appear that we are advocating a purely Quaker attitude to the Communion service, and are throwing it aside as no longer of any value or authority for the Church. Authority we deny it, but value we do not. We believe that while the Lord's Supper is not a compulsory and indispensable sacrament, it is yet a valuable and significant help to Christian living. It is not of the *esse* of our faith ; but we may still hold it to be of the *bene esse*. We believe that it is well for us to have that conviction of the sacrament of common life, of which we have already spoken, and to let every meal—yea, and every experience of life—speak to us of Christ's love and sacrifice. We believe that it is well for us to live indeed in the atmosphere of Christ. But we also believe it is well to have seasons in which we gather with

our fellow Christians solemnly to remember together our Lord's dying on our behalf. Our remembrance should not be confined to those seasons. It may well be peculiarly clear and full in them. We must not demand that everyone *must* come to such services. We may well strive to make them so full of rich significance and helpfulness that all who love the Lord unfeignedly shall rejoice together to them.

To many people the Communion service is but a dead form. We must find some way of bringing out the rich significance it may hold. *It is a service of remembrance*, to remember the precious sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf—not merely to remember *that* He died, but to remember the love that breathed through His sacrifice, the love that sought us and seeks us and saves us. We need to think not alone of the physical agony of the Cross, but to realize that that was but a symbol of the suffering that human sin and rejection gives to the heart of God. Let it be not only remembrance of a fact, but of its significance. *It is a feast*. The symbols are small, but they should be symbolic of much, and while as a material feast it is scant, as a spiritual feast it may be plentiful and rich. This service should be a great inner experience for us, and we should leave it with a new light in our eye, and a new joy burning in our heart. Here we should eat the Bread of Life, and drink the Water of Life—eat and drink of the Lord Jesus—partake of His Spirit, and drink the essential life of His heart. Our

feasting on Him should not be confined to such seasons. It may well rise to the heights here. *It is a fellowship, a communion.* It should be a time of fullest, gladdest heart fellowship with Jesus. His presence should be as real to us as it was to the disciples on that memorable night. We are His guests, and He wants us to know Him better because we have gathered at His board. It should also be a time of real fellowship with one another, and He wants us to know one another better because we have set togther at His board. We should realize that we are bound together in a common love and service, and the fulness of our common impulse should link us indissolubly to one another. Why is it that freemasonry is a far more real link between perfect strangers than membership of the Christian Church often is between people who sit together at the table of the Lord? Fellowship is one of the great words of the New Testament, but it is far from being one of the great facts of our modern Christian experience. *It is a Eucharist, a thanksgiving.* The note of praise should thrill through every heart. Let it be a service of joy and glad thanksgiving, marked by praise for all the love and gifts of God in Jesus Christ. "Eat this bread, and be ye thankful." *It is also a sacrament*—a soldier's vow of obedience, a renewed pledge of our loyalty to our Lord, and a new determination to live for Him and in Him. There may be other elements in its significance to be brought out. But if we can find some means of bringing

these out clearly, and of making them really vital to all who attend the service, if we can make the service really live for the Church, we shall not need to discuss whether attendance is necessary. We shall find on the part of Christ's people an unquenchable desire to come to it. The symbol is nothing to them. Give them but a glimpse of that which is symbolized, and *it* will be everything.

VIII

We have therefore reached the conclusion that while we cannot allow that any sacrament is indispensable to the true Church, at least three sacraments are worthy to be retained. In each case we believe that while they are not of the *esse* of the Church they are of the *bene esse*. But if three, why only three? If the number of the sacraments that can be traced back to the New Testament can be extended by one, why by only one? We would not affirm that these are the only desirable sacraments. We would affirm that no sacraments are indispensable, or can be made the test of faith, but we would also affirm that the Church is perfectly free to introduce any sacrament that can be truly helpful to full Christian living, provided it is not made compulsory, and provided the form is not held in higher honour than the significance—provided, that is, that the form instead of being the casket in which the significance is locked is the appropriate

dress of that significance wherein it shall shine forth in all its unmistakable beauty.

We believe that the attitude to the sacraments here advocated would preserve all that is true and valuable in every Church's present attitude to them. Our aim has not been comprehension in the sense of making it possible for every variety of view and practice to exist side by side in unrelated sufferance, but to arrive at a unified view which will preserve the essential truth which the Friends have grasped so clearly and so exclusively, and to bind it into a single whole with that which the other Churches have grasped, to take the truth which the Baptists have stood for, and to relate it in a single whole to that which the Pædobaptist Churches have maintained. We seek the unity of the truth, and the unity of the mind of the Spirit.

CHAPTER VI

THE CREEDS

WHEN we approach the subject of the Creeds we are on perilous ground. Through all the Church's history belief has been held of vital significance, and fiercer controversy has gathered round Creed than round anything else, and the most terrible charge that could be launched against any man has been that of heresy. It is interesting to observe that in those Churches which have no official Creed, there are many who claim to embody in their own beliefs the only genuine standard of orthodoxy, and who freely scatter charges of heresy against their brethren, both in their own and in other Churches.

I

It is further interesting to observe that while in matters of Church government, the appeal is to the New Testament or to the practice of Apostolic or sub-Apostolic days, in the matter of Creed it is widely felt that wisdom reached its climax, and authority its maximum, in the Church of the Fourth Century. It is not pretended that the Church of that age rose to the sublime heights of unworldli-

ness and humble service, nor that it had any noteworthy grasp of the principle of mutual love. The thirteenth chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians was not inscribed in letters of gold in its midst, nor in worthier letters on its heart. Nor can it be supposed that it was marked by an unrivalled wealth of scholarship. Neither spirituality nor scholarship were its peculiar marks. Yet it pleased the Holy Spirit in His inscrutable wisdom to unfold to it a complete intellectual grasp of the form of truth, which can never be superseded. Here we reach finality of form. This interesting proposition requires to be not merely stated but proved. Unfortunately no proof is adduced. Perhaps it is felt to be self-evident. We are simply told that the Church must retain as the corporate expression of its faith the form which was given to it in the Fourth Century, without any indication being given of why this authority attaches to the Church of that day. Lest we be misunderstood, and be held guilty of the sin and ingratitude of slighting the men who were the bulwark of the faith in their day, and without whose heroic labours and stand we might have had no faith to inherit, let us say frankly that we do appreciate the very real services they rendered to the Church and to the faith in their day, and the very important contribution they made to the understanding of Christian truth. We neither ignore their faults nor their services, but we cannot make them the standard of the faith. Others, too, have rendered distinguished service to the faith, and have brought out

aspects which to the Fathers of the Fourth Century were of no acknowledged importance. And in our desire to acknowledge our debt to the ones, we must not fail to do justice to the others.

It is proposed to make the Nicene Creed "The sufficient standard" of the Church's corporate faith, to which assent will be required, and which is to be liturgically used in some undefined but not rigid and invariable way in the Church's services.[19] The question of that Creed's sufficiency will arise later. At first we will think of its intelligibility. Is it contended that the Nicene Creed is luminously clear in its meaning, and that simple, ordinary men and women, and in particular, simple ordinary men and women of the twentieth century, could be in no doubt of its exact significance? Is it not the case that serious study of the ideas and circumstances and controversies out of which it was born are necessary to clear any understanding of its very terminology? Is it really an eternal statement of the faith, or has it not rather the very decided stamp of a particular age upon it? Is it not certain that the great majority of those who repeat its phrases have only the haziest notion of the precise significance of the beliefs they are professing? Or is it maintained that it is not necessary to have a clear and intelligent grasp of the meaning of the Creed professed? In that case, why not have the "*Om mani padme hum*" and be done with it?

But what is meant by "assent" to the Creed? Is merely an unwillingness to challenge it intended, or is it meant that the Creed is to be really

believed? The Creed may be accepted, in the sense that it is not challenged, through sheer indifference to its content. It may not be accepted through honest and earnest thought, leading to the conviction that it is not a wholly true statement of the faith. Is the spirit of indifference to the Creed to be exalted above the spirit of frank and earnest inquiry? If so, let us confess candidly that we pretend to exalt theology because we despise it, and that we establish a Creed because we do not value it. If we mean that all that we require from men is the declaration that they are willing to believe that these statements are true, without inquiry, on the authority of the Church, then we may tell ourselves that we have moved out of the realm of indifference into that of humble belief. But unfortunately it is not belief in the Creed, but in the Church and in the Church's wisdom. The only real article of the Creed then professed would be, "I believe in the infallibility of the Church." If that is our proposal let us say so fearlessly. We shall at least know where we are. Only we shall not build the true Church that way.

If, however, it is felt that what is required is an honest and sincere belief in the statements of the Creed, we are faced with the dilemma that the great mass of ordinary people simply do not understand it, and cannot without a mental discipline which is out of the question for most of them. We shall then have to confess that our Church is only for men and women of a high degree of intelligence, of extensive training, and of very marked theological

acumen. It is not intended to be a Church for the people—for the humble men and women, such as Jesus moved amongst. Our Christianity is a system of profound speculation. But we shall need to place the New Testament on our Index Expurgatorius. For there will always be some who, reading that Book, would be filled with wonder to discover that Jesus knew so little of the essence of the religion He founded, and which bears His name, as to be indifferent to the things His followers have discovered to be so crucial. He used to say such things as "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." If He ever said, "Blessed are they that believe in the Trinity, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," it was not thought worth while to preserve the remark, but somehow it does not have the air of intrinsic probability. To the Rich Young Ruler He said, "One thing thou lackest," but the one thing was not the Homoousios, but a readiness to follow Jesus with undivided zeal, and with a heart that was conscious only of a boundless love for Him. And somehow, as long as the page of the New Testament lies open to men, there will be some—simple and ignorant, perhaps, but utterly sincere—who will feel that Jesus had the truer standard of values.

II

We cannot but feel that it would be an advantage if the Church had a Creed which recited all the simple and grand things which Jesus required men

to believe. It might contain such articles as the following : I believe that God is a loving Father; I believe that God is like Jesus; I believe that in knowing Jesus I know God; I believe that God calls me to be like Jesus; I believe that the way of Jesus is the Ideal way; I believe that I ought to love and serve God ; I believe that I ought to love and serve my fellow man ; I believe that my neighbour's good is as important to me as my own ; I believe in the glory of humility and in the majesty of unselfishness ; I believe in the supremacy of love and in the might of forgiveness ; I believe not in grasping but in giving ; I believe in the spirit of the Good Samaritan ; I believe in forgiving my enemies. These are propositions which could be reasonably apprehended by everybody, and a hearty and unfeigned belief might be demanded. True, if it would be a simple creed to understand, it would not be an easy one to subscribe to. True it would be a rather remarkable Creed. But it would at least be more relevant to the Christian life than the Nicene.

It may be said that this is all beside the point, for of course it is understood that all these things would be believed, for everyone knows that the Church stands for them. But what of the declaration of the "sufficiency" of the Nicene Creed? Does it not at least relegate these to a secondary position? And is it so patent that the Church stands for these things? On the contrary, it is often seriously doubted whether the Church cares at all

for them, and certain it is that the majority of our members only believe them with grave mental reservations. These weightier matters should be kept in the place of central prominence, and not neglected under the pretence that they are taken for granted.

III

It may also be said that the Nicene Creed is implicit in the Gospels, or at any rate in the New Testament.[20] It may be urged that every clause has Scriptural basis and warrants, and that it is but the unfolding of the theological inwardness of the New Testament. That is a proposition which would need some examining. We should need to ask not only whether these articles are implicit in the New Testament, but whether they are the only theological implications of that Book. We should need to ask whether the emphasis and prominence given to these implications can fairly be deduced from the New Testament, and in particular from the teaching of Jesus Himself. But even if all this were granted, even if it were allowed that the Nicene Creed accurately sums up the essential theological implications of the New Testament, it would not affect the position. Our point is not so much that the Nicene Creed is not true, as that is no true test of a man's Churchmanship. No man can express a valid judgment on its truth without a good deal of study and investigation—not

only Scriptural, but also historical and speculative. And therein it stands condemned as a test of Christianity.

Every man must, of course, have some theology —some fundamental beliefs which are the source and spring of all his living. It is not necessary that it be of a highly systematized and intellectual nature. It is not necessary that he should systematize all the implications of his beliefs. All that is necessary is that his beliefs should be characteristically Christian—that is, should issue in the Christian life. For Christianity is not intellectually apprehended. It is given in immediate experience, in living experience of God in Jesus Christ. No man can have that experience without some beliefs either leading up to it or springing out of it. But it is enough if those beliefs are broad and simple ones, such as those found in the Gospels. It is enough that they be inseparably bound up with the experience and the life that we call Christian. For instance, it may be true that Jesus was able to heal the paralytic because He was the Son of God. But it was not necessary for the paralytic to be intellectually convinced of that fact in order to be healed. It was sufficient for him to believe that Jesus had power to heal him, without tracing that power to its source. In like manner, while the Person of Christ is undoubtedly implicit in His work, while He undoubtedly achieves in virtue of what He is, it is not necessary that we should have the full intellectual grasp of the mystery of His Person in order to share the fruits of His work.

It is enough that we have a sufficiently real belief in His power to save us, and a sufficiently intense passion of love for Him to commit ourselves without reserve unto Him and His way. The Creed may be implicit in the New Testament. It is sufficient that it remains implicit, then, in our faith.

We are not, be it observed, taking the position that it does not matter what a man believes. On the contrary, it matters very much. Life and faith are inextricably woven together. But we do say that it does not matter one little bit what he merely says he believes. What does matter is the real inner conviction of his heart, that faith whereby he lives, and which is the spring of his life. We do not propose that the Church should have no Creed—no corporate faith. We are not concerned whether it is explicitly formulated, or whether it is only implicit in all its life, but whether it is the former or not it should most certainly be the latter. If it is crystallized and formulated, let it be in clear and simple propositions, intelligible to all, moving primarily or even exclusively in the atmosphere of the Gospels, and dealing exclusively with those fundamental principles whereby men live, and whereby they live the Christian life.

IV

So far we have taken no account of the suggestion that liberty of interpretation should be allowed.[21] It is remarkable that while the Creed

is to be insisted on as of the *esse* of the Church, everything is to be done to make it utterly negligible. There will be those who will not understand it, or who will be indifferent to it, who will blindly repeat it in unintelligent acquiescence. It is not to be seriously supposed that any complaint will be raised against them. But there will be those who have taken the trouble to understand something of the mysteries with which it deals, who have enough of the intellectual and speculative equipment to be able to form some judgment on these questions. Many of them will not be able to believe what others hold is the exact meaning of the expressions of the Creed. They will not be able to believe what the Fourth Century Fathers, who framed the Creed, had in mind when they drew it up. They will be perfectly free to dispense with any such belief. So long as they utter the words of the Creed, it will not matter what sense they extract from it. If they have a delicate conscience, and decline to express their faith in words which will be understood by others differently from their own meaning, we must show them the door of the Church. But so long as they will mouth our words, they may believe what they can. This is not to exalt the Creed, but to despise it. If it is felt that the Creed can only be repeated with mental reservations, then the sooner its repetition is no longer insisted on the better. If men are going to repeat the same words, but mean by them totally different things, we shall simply not be standardizing the faith, and the sooner we drop the camouflage the

better. We but deceive ourselves if we speak of it as an "objective standard of truth." [22] Truth lies not in the form of words employed, but in the ideas they express, and without unity of ideas there cannot be unity of truth.

We believe that the Report is absolutely right in not wishing to standardize men's real theological and speculative beliefs. We believe it is absolutely right when it "recognize(s) most fully and thankfully the continued presence and teaching of the living Spirit in His body, and emphasize(s) the duty of the Church to keep its mind free and ready to receive from Him in each day and generation ever-renewed guidance in the apprehension and expression of the truth." [23] But in that case let the Nicene Creed be forthwith dropped. If we declare that wisdom did not die with the Fourth Century Fathers, and that the significance of the Christian faith was not exhausted in the Nicene Creed, why must the form of the faith be limited to that Creed? If the Holy Spirit has given us more light, and is still giving us more light, why should we relegate it to an inferior position? Why should His word to us be of less importance in our eyes than His ancient word? Why should His revelation to our generation be of less importance in the eyes of the Church of our generation than His revelation to the Fourth Century? If some aspects of truth are seen in clearer light to-day, let us modify the expression of our faith in such a way as to make them known. And most certainly if liberty of theological conviction is to be allowed—as it ought

to be allowed—let us have liberty to express the tolerated convictions in language which is their appropriate dress, and not to be compelled to deck them in a common uniform which cramps and strains them. Whatever Creed we insist on, let it be utterly real, and let subscription be utterly sincere. Let it be such that we can repeat it meaning the same things—a genuine, common faith. Let our language be used to express our thought and not to conceal it, and if we say there are matters on which we are not justified in demanding unity of conviction, let us leave them altogether out of our Creed, for plainly they are not of the *esse* of our faith.

V

We must now return to the question of the sufficiency of the Nicene Creed. It is declared to be the sufficient statement of our corporate faith.[24] Yet we are also told that it must not be supposed that this implies that it is a complete expression of the faith.[25] Indeed, we are told that it is not. The Holy Spirit has taught, and is teaching, fresh things. We have already seen that we are to be at liberty to extract whatever sense from the Creed we can. In what sense, then, is this Creed "sufficient"? Apparently it is meant that the agglomeration of interpretations that can be placed upon it form the crucial and indispensable minimum of the Christian faith. Everything else is optional. The different alternative beliefs which may be

drawn from this expression are essential. They are not all essential, of course. Indeed, none of them is essential. They may be mutually inconsistent beliefs, but so long as we hold something that we can connect with this Creed, all is well. But what has become of that unity of the faith that we were told was essential to the Reunited Church?[26] It is replaced by a closed circle of beliefs, within which we are free to differ completely. On the questions with which the Creed deals no two people may hold the same real beliefs. How, then, does it secure unity, and in what sense can we regard it as the sufficient statement of our common faith? Surely the sufficient statement of our common faith must deal with those things on which we are really one.

Further, in this reference to the sufficiency of the Nicene Creed we are not told for what it is sufficient. Sufficient for salvation? It has no reference to salvation. We have already seen that it does not refer to those vital things on which the New Testament, and particularly Christ Himself, insists. It says nothing about the committal of the self utterly and without reserve to the love and loyalty and service of Jesus Christ, yet this is of greater importance to salvation than the belief of any of the articles of the Creed. Moreover, countless simple souls have unquestionably been saved, who simply could not understand the Nicene Creed, and who, therefore, could not subscribe to it or believe it, in any proper sense of the words. We shall require much convincing that it is suffi-

cient for salvation. Then sufficient for admission to the Church? But surely we should be willing to admit to the Church all who are genuine Christians. And if men can be Christians without an intelligent and sincere subscription to this Creed we should find some more appropriate test. Whatever is sufficient for salvation should be sufficient for admission to the Church, unless we think we can create something more select than, and superior to, the Kingdom of God. Frankly, we do not know wherein the sufficiency of this Creed lies, or for what it is sufficient. We know that at the present time there are many who repeat this Creed in utter indifference to its content. No suggestion has been made that would prevent their continuing to do so for the future, or that would suggest that it would be viewed with any graver disapprobation than at present. We shall require much convincing that a Creed which can be treated with contempt is a sufficient test for anything.[27]

VI

There is another Creed mentioned, to which we have so far given no attention. This is the Apostles' Creed.[28] It is clear that much less weight and authority is attached to this, although it is much more ancient, and may even go back to sub-Apostolic days. It is much simpler and less speculative than the Nicene Creed, was born out of a calmer atmosphere, and is vastly more intelligible to the ordinary mind. May we not then accept

this as binding on the whole Church? We fear not. We have already said that if we are to have a common Creed it should be a genuine common creed—that is, a common faith—and not merely a common expression of a variety of inconsistent faiths. And it should be such a form of words that those who subscribe may do so in all sincerity and honesty. Now there are few in our day who believe in the resurrection of the body. Why should we be compelled to profess belief in it? Of course we may attach a significance to our profession which most certainly did not belong to it when it was framed. But if one clause may be got round in this way, why not others? There are indeed several clauses which many will not be able to accept in the sense which they were once given. Dr. Bethune Baker [29] has shown us how we may still go on using the words of this Creed, while attaching to every clause a sense which was undreamed of at an earlier day. His contentions may be perfectly sound that he embodies in his different beliefs the same essential truths that the Creed was framed to protect, and that therefore so long as it is made a test of faith he is justified in subscribing to it. His spiritual kinship with the framers of the Creed entitles him to be regarded as a true successor of theirs. There are some who urge that he and his like ought to be cast out of the Church forthwith, but if it is allowable to treat one clause of the Creed in this way, there is no obvious reason why it is not allowable to treat all. The more sensible plan

would appear to be to get rid of this Creed. Why should it be retained as a test of faith, if it is not wholly and heartily believed in the sense it originally bore. Let us have a Creed which protects those truths it was created to protect in language which is appropriate to our convictions, and which cannot be misunderstood. If we say that men are free to hold fresh views, let us realize that the only sound corollary is that they are free to express them in fresh ways.

VII

Do we seem to be giving too little weight to Theology? Do we seem to be ignoring the services of those who have investigated the implications of our faith? Not for one moment. We believe, indeed, that religion is superior to theology, and that in particular the Christian religion in concrete life is superior to Christian theology in abstract thought. But we do value that thought. We believe there is no intellectual activity more glorious and more honourable than theological speculation. While we do not think that a grasp of the mysteries of Christ's Person is essential to a saving faith, yet we do believe that His Person is implicit in His work, and that it is of great value and importance to ask what manner of man this was. We value it so highly that we would have it carried on in a perfectly free and unfettered way. We would let men in whom the love of truth burned strong, and whose minds desired to soar to the heights of this

pinnacle of truth, be free to conduct their studies under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, untrammelled by historical Creeds. They would study the Creeds of history, and would rightly appraise at their very high worth those earlier statements of the faith, valid perhaps for their own day, since resting on the presuppositions of their age, but not valid for our day. We would have no standard of speculative orthodoxy, but we would have very rigid standards of orthodoxy of life. The man whose life breathed the spirit of Jesus, and in whose face we saw the light of God's presence, we would honour, whatever his speculative convictions. He whose life was a flagrant denial of all those spiritual qualities which shone so gloriously in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, we would account the heretic, however unblamable his theology might appear.

Let us then abolish Creeds, of the type proposed, but let us welcome theology and honour it. Let us realize that its sphere is wider than that of the Nicene Creed. It has to unfold not merely the fact of God's existence, but the character of God's heart. It has to fathom not merely the mystery of Christ's Person, but the equally profound mystery of His atoning work. It has to investigate the human heart and realize its possibilities and perversities. It has to search the mysteries of life and eternity. Let it carry on its great task without fetter or constraint, realizing that it is the servant of the Church in the truest and holiest sense of the word servant—not blindly obeying the behests of the Church, but freely spending itself for the good of

the Church, earnestly striving to minister to her welfare by bringing into ever clearer light the meaning of the faith she holds. We would set men of humble and pious spirit, but of profound intellect and of intense love of the truth, free for this service, ordain them to it in the name of the whole Church, and honour them, though we did not follow them, in all their conclusions, believing that the Holy Spirit would lead us, even through their oft-times mistaken, but ever sincere, gropings after light, steadily but surely into the full radiance of the whole truth.

CHAPTER VII

ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

THE real test of the Church is in the character of the persons it admits to membership. However perfect its organization, however ideal its ministry in character and function, however true its Creeds, however authoritative its sacraments, if its membership is not pure, it is not a pure and ideal Church. We are rightly told that "the Church is the body of Christ, and its constitutive principle is Christ Himself, living in His members through His Spirit." [30] If Christ is not living, then, in the Church's members, they are not His members. They do not belong to the true Church. The true Church must be such that it will attract to itself all who are truly Christ's, all who have His spirit in them, all who find the spring of their life in Him. It must neither attract nor admit any others. It may be said that it is impossible to guard absolutely against the presence of any others in the Church. Was there not a Judas even amongst the Twelve? Have we not the Parable of the Tares to assure us that the Enemy will mingle the false with the true to the end? That may be so, but we are not thereby excused from taking the utmost care not

to admit the false to the membership of the Church. The Twelve were not chosen promiscuously, and whatever explanation of the choice of Judas may be resorted to, it cannot encourage us to admit men to the Church without sound reasons for believing that they are sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever interpretation of the Parable of the Tares may be held, we cannot pretend that we are encouraged to welcome the tares into the Church, regardless of whether they are tares or wheat. The enemy may sow tares, but the servants of the householder do not. Our concern is with the genuine wheat, and with that alone. The tares are undoubtedly an evil. They are not of the Church. And if we would have a true and a pure Church, we must strive to admit to membership only those who are true and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I

So far we have not had much guidance on this matter in the discussions on Reunion. It is well known and cannot be disputed that every Church to-day numbers a great many people who simply are not Christians. Many of them are an open disgrace to the Christian name, and some of them by their life are actually keeping honest people from joining the Churches. There are hypocrites flourishing in every Denomination ; there are worldlings shamelessly occupying prominent positions ;

there are men in whom no shadow of the spirit of Christ appears. What is to be done to alter this? Apparently it is regarded as an unimportant detail, to be reached when matters of "principle" are settled, but assuredly it is vastly more important than all the discussions about episcopacy and orders and sacraments and creeds. If we can solve this problem, we shall have solved everything that matters—if we can but see to it that the membership of the Christian Church is Christian.

We may be reminded that it is agreed that one of the visible and recognizable marks of the true Church is "an ideal of the Christian life, protected by a common discipline." [31] Every Church professes that now, but the protection is not very effectively exercised. We are not told in what way this visible and recognizable mark is to be more effectively secured in the future than at present, and it does not appear that any real reform in this direction is contemplated.

We are confirmed in this impression when we learn that Baptism is the outward and visible sign of admission into membership of the Church. We are told that this is by the ordinance of Christ and His Apostles,[32] as though it were not even a debatable proposition. But we have already called attention to the grave confusion of using the term Baptism for two totally different things. We are given no hint whatever in this Report that the Pædobaptist Churches contemplate renouncing Infant Baptism, or that they mean by Baptism anything other than Infant Baptism. We must there-

fore assume that they here declare that Christ and His Apostles "ordained" that admission to membership of the Church should be by being sprinkled in infancy. We are not informed whence this impression is derived, but it is an "ordinance" which is not preserved for us in the New Testament.

And see where it leads us. Admission into the membership of the Church has no relation to faith or life. The unconscious child is made a member of the Church at the will of others. There is no guarantee that the child will grow up to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, or to have His Spirit dwelling in his heart. We give a promiscuous welcome into the Christian Church to those who know nothing of Christ, or of Christian teaching, or of Christian principles, who do not know the ideal of the Christian life, and who may never embrace it when they do know it. There is here no effort whatever to secure a pure membership, and we shall have to give much more consideration to the question of admission if we are to reach our goal.

But is it really meant that Baptism is the door of admission to the Church? Is Baptism in actual practice the door of real admission into any of the Pædobaptist Churches? Is not some personal and responsible decision required before membership is really recognized? And is not such decision contemplated for the future? In other words, is it contended that unconscious Baptism is the door to effective membership of the Church, or must it be followed by something else before membership be-

comes effective? If so, surely it is extraordinary that this Report should only consider it of importance to lay down the law of admission to provisional and ineffective membership, and should preserve an absolute silence on admission to full and responsible membership. Can it really be supposed that Christ and His Apostles were only concerned to ordain a mode of admission to provisional membership, and that they were indifferent to the manifestly more important question of full and effective membership? In any case, if Baptism is not intended to be in the future, any more than it has been in the past, the door to vital membership, it is only misleading to mention Baptism alone in connection with the subject. As to what the door to effective membership will be, we are given no hint whatever. Apparently it has not been deemed of sufficient importance to be discussed at the present stage. We have not reached fundamentals yet.

II

Various practices prevail to-day in the different Churches. In some Churches it is required that a candidate shall have some knowledge of the Church's teachings. He must go through a course of instruction in catechism, and be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him—or, but too often, that is not in him. This is frequently purely an exercise in memory, and is altogether inadequate to secure a Christian membership. Other Churches,

which are thoroughly convinced of the inadequacy of this test of membership, maintain that the only true basis of membership is an experience, a redeeming experience of God in Jesus Christ. In this they are doubtless right, but when we inquire what steps they take to ensure that members shall have had this experience, we are often less impressed. Many of them send one or two of their graver members to interview the candidate, to inquire into the experience and report. Unfortunately, too, often, the candidate is expected to profess a sort of standard experience, and, but too commonly, in stereotyped terms, and it is certain that many profess experiences that they have not had, but which they feel they ought to have had. Often it is not that they are dishonest. Far from it. Frequently they are true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are to be warmly welcomed into the fellowship of the Church, and encouraged in every way. But they are at the beginning of the Christian life. They have had an experience, whose reality they know, but they cannot philosophize on it, and when they are asked to they fall back on the current terms, because they lie nearest to hand and will be most readily accepted, and because, feeling sure that their experience is a true one, they believe that these terms must describe it. Often the visitors are very limited and narrow, and many of the young people shrink from the interview, particularly if they are to be interviewed by those whose whole outlook on things is different from their own modern outlook. In

some Churches this interview is merely a formality, and confines itself to the thinnest of generalities. It is neither to be feared nor honoured. It is not suggested that this method is always a farce. On the contrary, we know that it is often very effective, particularly if really wise and sympathetic visitors are available, men and women of large and wise hearts, and if real care is exercised in their choice. But there is little doubt that in many Churches all that this method comes to in practice is that it is the easiest thing in the world to become a Church member. Membership stands for very little, and anyone who has even a passing desire to become a member is welcomed into the fellowship of the Church—such as it is. There are many Churches that will rejoice unspeakably if they have received a large number of additions during the year. They are less concerned with the reality and vitality of the faith of those they have admitted, and they will cheerfully behold them a few months after admission grow increasingly indifferent to things, so long as more are following in their track. So long as they get plenty through the door of admission, the constant leakage does not matter. This is far from satisfactory. Moreover, how often the members of these Churches receive no systematic instruction at all in Christian teaching. They have scant knowledge of the duties and implications of Church membership, scant knowledge of the essential teachings of the Christian faith, scant perception of the whither of the Christian life.

III

We believe that very earnest corporate thinking will need to be devoted to this question. We shall again have to gather into a unified whole all that is wise and true in every Church's attitude, and to shed all that is worthless. If we proceed to make some suggestions of the lines along which we believe that we may find a solution, it is with great diffidence, for we realize that this is the problem *par excellence* that confronts the Church. We realize the extreme difficulty of estimating whether another is really a Christian, and while we should not throw the door of the Church open to all and sundry, we must avoid an attitude of mere censoriousness.

In the first place, there is something to be said for that which is signified by baptismal admission. While we deny that Infant Baptism is true Baptism, or that in any adequate sense it can admit to full Church membership, we do not underrate the truth it has preserved. We have already advocated the encouragement of parents to bring their children to present them in the House of God, and to undertake vows over them. We would have a sacrament, only not a sacrament for the unconscious babe, but for the responsible parent. We said, in advocating this, that such a sacrament would inevitably involve consequences for the child. If the vows are really kept, and the parents did strive to bring the child up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, if they did honestly endeavour to maintain in their home a

truly Christian atmosphere, it should be the simplest and most natural thing in the world for the child to grow up a Christian. No sudden crisis in life will be required, no conversion in the sense of a complete facing round. The soul will gradually open out into the consciousness of God, and the love and service of Jesus Christ. Just as without any sudden crisis the child comes to a time when it realizes its own individuality, so there will steal into its consciousness, unobserved, the realization that God is all in all. We would recognize all this in some appropriate way. We would regard the child as the child of the Church, and as belonging to the family of God's people. We would recognize that the Church is the natural home of the child, since the child naturally belongs to Christ, and we would welcome it into the home.

This is not to go back on what we have already said. We would not regard these children as full and effective members of the Church, nor would we persuade ourselves that the question of membership had now been settled in principle. We would keep a register of these children, and would regard them as members in pupilage. We would have the Church take a loving and responsible interest in them, for we believe that if it does not, it is guilty of a grave breach of duty.

It is interesting to observe that the Society of Friends, who have no rite of Infant Baptism, recognize the truth which the doctrine of baptismal admission into the membership of the Church preserves. They have their Birthright Members. The

children born to their full members are enrolled as Birthright Members of the Society. But the Quakers, with characteristic excess of emphasis on the truth they see, admit them to life membership. There we believe they err. It should be but a provisional membership, and if when they reached an age of discretion they did not voluntarily wish to associate themselves in full and active membership with the Church, we would have their names removed from the Roll. We would have an age limit to membership of this Roll. Possibly it might be as late as twenty-one.

IV

Moreover, when any members desired to be admitted to fuller membership of the Church, or when any who were not on the Birth Members' Roll desired admission to the Church, we would very carefully examine the reality of their membership of the body of Christ. In the majority of cases this would take place in the middle teens. It is in these years that self-consciousness undergoes rapid development, and it is well known that it is at this time that personal decision to follow Jesus Christ is most commonly made.

We would not ask of these young people any elaborate theology. We would not ask of them all a profound conviction of sin. This is not because we have a light view of sin, but because we have a respect for reality. We believe that a light view of sin is one of the gravest evils of our time,

and we are sure that men need to have a much deeper insight into the reality and nature and exceeding sinfulness of sin, ere we shall see happier days. But we would have sinners convicted of sin, and many of these boys and girls have not plunged far into sin, especially if they have been reared in a home atmosphere that has been redolent of Christ. They have no real consciousness of guilt immeasurable, and it does not conduce to reality to make them profess it. We are convinced that there are a great number of professed Christians of many years standing who are greater sinners than many of these boys and girls. Sinfulness is to be estimated by the light received and the opportunities offered, and the men and women who have listened Sunday by Sunday to rich spiritual teaching, without getting on any farther in the Christian life than the latest recruit, have much need to be convicted of sin. Moreover, we recognize that the profoundest consciousness of sin is not found at the beginning of the Christian life. It is the saint who feels his unworthiness far more than the beginner in the Christian life. The mark of the saint is that he realizes that whatever he is, it is nothing compared with what he ought to be ; whatever he possesses of the Spirit of Christ, it is nothing compared with what he might have possessed ; however great his achievement in Christian living, he is far, far from the heights of his ideals. Paul, the magnificent Apostle, described himself as the chief of sinners. He was not using terms of cant. He was not thinking of his past persecuting days. He did not

mean that he had been the chief of sinners, but that he then felt himself to be. He felt himself to be the chief of sinners just because he was the chief of saints. Therefore, we would not ask of all these boys and girls a profound conviction of sin.[33] All we would ask of them is a genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and a hearty decision to serve Him. Let them believe that Jesus is the supremely lovely, and the supremely lovable, and let them make Him the Hero and Friend of their hearts, and yield themselves gladly and freely to His service, and we believe that we have all that we need from them at this stage. Let them love Him, and we are sure that a growing perception of the hatefulness of sin, and an increasing loathing of it will be theirs. Given this, and we would admit them to Junior Membership of the Church—not, be it observed, to full and final membership.[34]

It is not that we would merely withhold from them a vote on Church affairs, should the Reunited Church be democratically controlled. We would, indeed, have meetings of the Junior Church, and train them to take an intelligent and live interest in the affairs of the Church. We would prepare them for the duties of citizenship in the Church. But it should be understood that membership of the Junior Church was probationary, and carried with it certain definite duties. One of these would be the attending of instruction classes, to learn what is the Church's teaching. We would not merely teach them a catechism which is unvarying from age to age. It is agreed that the Church's

real thought and teaching changes from age to age. We would recognize this in our instruction classes. We would have a Board appointed to issue courses of instruction for these classes. We have already said that we would not demand uniformity of theological views from the whole Church. We would therefore have this Board issue courses of instruction embodying what is the generally approved teaching of the Church of its day, but it would not be binding on the Junior members to accept everything in this teaching. It would be binding on them to consider it. The truest education is not that which provides one with ready made views, but that which equips one to form one's own views. The courses we suggest should be open to frequent revision to bring out new emphasis according to the growing light.

We would not, however, have the course consist exclusively, or even principally, of theology. It should include some comparatively simple studies of the great things of our faith. It should include some training in how to read the Bible intelligently and helpfully. It should also include some study of the implications and duties, as well as the privileges, of Church membership. It should aim to cultivate habits of prayer and piety—in the richest sense of that much misused word. It should include some teaching on the Church's message to its own age, particularly with reference to the industrial, social and international problems of the day. In short, it should endeavour to make these young folk realize what being a Christian means

for them in their age. We would have it of the very essence of the instruction that it should not be the same from age to age, but should be constantly subjected to revision, to ensure its being thoroughly appropriate to the special needs of the age.

V

Transference from Junior Membership to full membership should not take place till some age to be agreed upon—possibly eighteen, possibly twenty-one—had at least been reached. But let it not be forgotten that prior to this we would regard them as in a very real sense members of the Church. They would be voluntary followers of Christ, undergoing training—undergoing training not in order to become Christians, but because they were Christians.

We do not suggest, however, that the transference from Junior Membership to full membership should automatically take place at the agreed age. Before it takes place, evidence should be forthcoming, not only that the classes of instruction have been attended and due interest shown, but also that in general life and character the Junior Member has lived a consistent Christian life. We feel that it is of the essence of our need to have a much higher standard. Membership of the Church must be made to mean something, and to mean a great deal. It may result in a much smaller number of admissions for a time. But it will mean a purer, a more compact, a healthier and

a more effective Church. It must be made a serious thing to join the Church—not a formidable thing, indeed, but not a thing to be undertaken lightly and carelessly. It should be made a joyous thing, a natural thing, and the most attractive thing on earth.

It should be added that we shall need to make some place for those who do not form the desire to join the Church, or the decision to serve Christ till they have reached full manhood or womanhood. They could not well be made Junior Members. That would probably be tantamount to forbidding them to come at all. We believe they should be for a time probationary members, and while it would still be desirable that they should be instructed in the things of the faith, some discretion would have to be allowed to those responsible. But before they were admitted to full membership, they should in any case have given evidence of consistent Christian living for some time.

We believe that membership of the Christian Church has been altogether too small and insignificant a thing in the past, and the sooner we fill it with new grandeur and fulness of meaning the better. We must not hedge it round with forms to give it a borrowed dignity ; we must not make it a thing impossible for simple ordinary people to join us. We must on no account make it a merely forbidding thing. We must make it the easiest thing conceivable for a true Christian, but a most formidable thing, and, if possible, an impossible thing for any other. If unsuitable people desire

membership they must not be roughly repelled, indeed, but neither must they be admitted. They must be received with sympathy and understanding, but real effort must be made to lead them from the mere desire to join the Church to genuine Christian living before they are admitted to the membership of the Church. The Church must become in truth the Body of Christ, its constitutive principle being Christ Himself, living in His members through His Spirit.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCIPLINE

THE problem of the Church's membership is not merely that of admission. It is altogether larger, and we must endeavour to attack all its aspects at once if we would attack any effectively. And ere we can complete our suggestions on admission we must turn to other aspects. One of the most important of these is discipline. The Church has always professed the power of discipline, but has not always exercised it in any truly effective way, and in most of our Churches it is to-day almost dead. When it has been exercised, the Church has been more concerned with a technical exercise than a vitally spiritual exercise. Heresy of belief has quickly brought the strong hand of discipline down; heresy of life has not been so serious. In some cases when life has been in flagrant violation of the moral standards of the general community, discipline has been exercised—generally rather reluctantly. But the standards of the Church should be altogether higher than those of the general community, and many a man who passes current in the community should be excluded from the fellowship of the Church.

I

Let it not be forgotten that to the world every member is a representative of the Church—and, for that matter, of the Church's Lord. The general estimate of the Church is but the general estimate of our members. And every unworthy member is a disgrace to the Church, and a disgrace to Christ, putting Him to open shame. We must value the honour of the Church, and the honour of Christ. We know the Parable of the Tares may be again invoked, and we may be told that it is plainly contrary to the will of Christ that we should exclude any from the Church, once they are in. Did He not give express injunction that the tares were not to be uprooted? We do not think that parable has the slightest relevance to the discussion. It has relevance to such things as the burning of heretics and the persecuting of men. We are forbidden to attempt to uproot from the world those whom we believe not to be of the Kingdom. God designed that the Kingdom should be coextensive with the world. He designed that the world should be all good grain. But it is mixed. It has also tares. The Kingdom and the world are not coextensive. And we must not attempt to make them coextensive by violence. We have to remember that the metaphors are not hard and unchanging. The spiritual tares may be converted into the good grain—a miracle that is impossible in the world of nature. But all this does not mean that we must not exercise

discipline in the Church, or that we must be careless of the honour of the Church or her Lord. We must not uproot the tares from the world. We must strive to convert them into good grain. But we must not imagine that we shall convert them into good grain by pretending that they already are good grain, or that it makes no difference whether they are or not.

Let it be stated right away that discipline should not be exercised in a hard and bitter and triumphant spirit. Any element of an unchristian spirit that enters into its exercise impairs its value. It should be exercised in the spirit of love and sympathy, with due remembrance of our own frailty. When the Church feels bound to rebuke one of its members, it should do so with sorrow, and it should at the same time look into its own heart and see how pure it is. It should most certainly ask itself whether it has been discharging its duty towards him, whether it has helped him as much as it might have done. For not only have the members of the Church a duty towards the Church, but the Church also has duties towards its members, and their failures are often really its failures. It should also be added that whenever discipline is exercised, its real purpose should be not so much to condemn as to reclaim, and it should be exercised in that spirit which is most calculated to reclaim.

II

We would have a high standard of life and character for the Church. We would have discipline exercised for the grave breaches of the moral standards of the community. But we would have it exercised for much besides. We have already said that we would have every Christian instructed in what it means to be a Christian. Anyone not living in accordance with that essential meaning should be subjected to discipline. Everyone who was known to be ignoring the principles of the Gospel in his relations with his employees—perhaps in her relations with domestic servants, in the case of women members—everyone who was false to the principles of Christ in home life and relations, everyone given to habits which sully the Christian name, we would discipline. We would have untruthfulness, selfishness, arrogance, pride, quarrelsomeness, and many other antitheses of the Christian graces recognized for the offences against the Christian Church that they really are. And most certainly we would have lack of fellowship so recognized. The Church is not merely an aggregate of people who have undertaken to follow Christ. It is a fellowship.[35] It should know a common life. It should be filled with the spirit of mutual love and friendship. That spirit should be particularly rich and full within the local Church. An offence against that spirit is an offence against Christ. When any two members are " not on speaking terms " they should

be disciplined. When any two members decline to have anything to do with one another, they are cherishing the spirit which is the antithesis of fellowship and putting Christ to open shame.

In many Churches absence from Communion services over a period is the principal occasion of discipline. We believe this to be wholly unsatisfactory. We believe it is degrading to the Lord's Supper to make the mechanical act of eating and drinking a test of Christianity. It tends to make it attended without relation to the spirit in which it is done. Moreover, we have said that we cannot regard the Lord's Supper as a sacrament binding upon everyone. We would have that attendance entirely optional. But we believe that the total ignoring of the Church's work and witness should be the occasion of discipline. When a man attends none of the Services of the Church, and takes no interest in its work, it cannot seriously be argued that his Churchmanship has much vitality. It is not merely a question of giving. We believe that in some Churches, so long as one maintains certain minimum subscriptions to the Church, his name is retained on the membership. We do not suggest that that is the consideration on which his name is entered. Far from it. But that, once entered, his interest in the Church may slacken and disappear without discipline being exercised, so long as this contribution is maintained, but that its cessation automatically removes his name. This is manifestly unhealthy. It is important that members

should feel the duty of giving to the Church, and should feel that its needs are a personal responsibility. But the Church is more than a Club, and we must carefully avoid giving any contrary impression,

A further occasion of discipline we would mention. We have advocated a Sacrament of Infant Presentation, at which parents or guardians would undertake vows for the training and rearing of the children in the nurture and fear of the Lord. We have also said that we would thereupon enrol the children as children of the Church. To these children the Church should feel a responsibility. If the vows of the parents or guardians are not being kept, if the children are not being given the promised opportunity to grow up easily and naturally into Christ, but are being reared in complete indifference to the will of Christ, we believe there is necessity for discipline.

All these are matters within the purview of the local Church, such, that is, that the local Church can best inquire into and decide upon, in ways that we shall return to consider. There are some offences, however, that the local Church may not be competent to deal with, and which would lie within the purview of the Diocese or of the Church as a whole. We would mention one such offence which is all too common at the present time—the slandering of fellow-Christians for alleged heresy. There is a School which believes that it has the only true Theology, and which makes its only serious business in life, not

the converting of sinners, not the reasoned persuasion of others to share its views, but the slandering of all who do not share its convictions. It makes malicious attacks on saintly men, men who find the source of all their life in Jesus Christ, men who love Him with whole-hearted passion, and men whose supreme desire in life is to serve Him. It represents them as dangerous monsters, wolves in sheep's clothing, emissaries of the Devil posing as servants of Christ, and by its appeals to prejudice inflames simple folk against them. The followers of this School are in general perfectly innocent. They have wholly false mental pictures of the men attacked, and for these false pictures they are not themselves responsible. But their leaders, who are actively and persistently maligning some of the finest servants Christ has in our age, are guilty of very serious offence against the Church. They are guilty of a grave breach of fellowship. It may or may not be true that they have the only true Theology. They certainly have not the true Christian spirit. There is a heresy of spirit which is far more unchristian than heresy of doctrine. It is recorded that one of the disciples once said to the Master, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; but we forbade him, *because he followeth not with us*." It is not recorded that Jesus replied, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord." His answer is said to have run, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us."

We would have all this maligning and slandering recognized for the serious offence against the fellowship of the Church that it actually is. It is not that we would suggest that the most conservative of views should be prohibited. We have already urged that complete liberty of theological conviction should be allowed, and by complete liberty we mean liberty to be either conservative or advanced. We believe that many of the most saintly and noble of Christians hold the most conservative of views. We also believe that many of the most saintly and noble of Christians hold the most modern and advanced of views. We do not judge Christianity by these things, for it does not consist in them. We see no reason whatever why men of differing theological conviction, but alike loving the Lord Jesus Christ and desiring to serve Him, should not work side by side, honouring one another, loving one another, encouraging one another in their efforts on His behalf.

III

It may be objected that all this discipline is but interference. What right has the Church to interfere in the private concerns of its members, even to the rearing of their families? We agree that the Church has no right to interfere in anything that is merely the private concern of its members. But it has every right to charge itself with its own affairs. It has every right to require

that its members shall be faithful to the laws of its constitution—that is, shall be faithful to the spirit which is the supreme law of the Christian Church. It has every right to speak if the vows made to its Lord on admission to its fellowship are not being fulfilled. It has every right to speak if solemn pledges given at its sacraments are being violated. More than this. It has a duty to speak at such times. The Church that is indifferent to these things is indifferent to its own purity and honour, and might as well declare forthwith that it stands for nothing in particular. If it holds forth an ideal of character, it announces that it is of no particular importance to live up to it, and it can hardly expect the world to be impressed with the ideal it so plainly ignores. Moreover, the Church has a duty, not only to itself and to its Lord and to the world, but also to the defaulting member himself. Therefore it must speak.

We would repeat most emphatically that it is absolutely useless to attempt to improve the Christian standard of the Church by more rigid care in the admission of new members, unless something is also done in this matter of discipline. In the first place, when young people apply for membership, it is exceedingly difficult to refuse them, even if they are not altogether fitted for membership, when it is perfectly plain that there are many recognized members of the Church who are vastly less fitted. To refuse them under such circumstances does not enhance the name of the

Church. It embitters the young people, gives rise to the impression that the Church has two standards of judgment, or is at the mercy of "influence," and it encourages the well-founded conviction that the Church lacks courage. Moreover, even if the door of admission is well guarded, the disintegrating influence of these unworthy members on the life and faith of the young and earnest members is unmistakable.

We shall return in the next chapter to the question of the authority to be required for the exercise of discipline. We have already said that it should not be exercised in a hard and bitter spirit. Its purpose should not be to condemn but to reclaim, and it should but condemn in order to reclaim. It should take the form at first of a loving and gentle remonstrance, and only if the offence be persisted in wilfully and deliberately should it take the form of exclusion from the fellowship of the Church. Whenever the Church finds it necessary to take this step, it should be taken with solemn grief, with deep heart searching, and with earnest and sincere prayer for the excommunicated. It should, of course, go without saying that no one excluded from the fellowship of one Church should be eligible for admission to another, without the express sanction of the Diocesan or other higher authority. This should in no case be given without very solid grounds for believing that there is genuine penitence, and a hearty recommittal of self to Christ.

We believe that these suggestions would lead to

a great and speedy reduction in the membership of the Church. That, indeed, is one of the chief things in their favour. They would require no little courage on the part of the Church. But they would result in a speedy accession of real power and influence, and they would bring us back to reality. We remember the ancient story of Gideon, and how his army was successively reduced by the elimination of the half-hearted and the careless. But it was not weakened. It was strengthened for its task. The small body of keen and enthusiastic and self-controlled men was effective. We believe that when the Church eliminates her faint hearts, and her cold hearts, and her faithless hearts, she will become effective. The world will see that she does stand for something real, for "an ideal of the Christian life, protected by a common discipline." And the world will listen to her and follow.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH MEETING

WE have thought of some aspects of the question of admission to the membership of the Church, and of the administration of discipline, and have advocated that Church membership should be made to mean a great deal more in character than it has done in the past. Yet we do not think it will suffice for our need if we stop with demanding a higher standard of Christian living. We believe that the fellowship of the Church must be made more real too. To us there is something utterly incongruous in people sitting side by side week after week worshipping together, yet never speaking to one another, and not knowing one another in any real sense. It is almost inconceivable. Yet it frequently occurs. Fellowship in worship should be the basis of fellowship in common life. We believe that the Church should stand for a genuine fellowship or brotherhood amongst its members.

I

There should be Church Meetings from time to time for the cultivation of fellowship. We

are not thinking at the moment of business Meetings, but purely of Meetings where the sole business is the cultivation of fellowship. The freest and friendliest intercourse should be promoted, and the members should be given every opportunity to know one another, and should be made to feel that it is a duty to know one another intimately. The more widely the spirit of fellowship extends through the Church the better it is for the Church. Let us recapture that love of the brethren which was one of the finest marks of the Early Church.

II

Beyond this we would have Meetings of the Church for Conference and Business. We believe that it is altogether wise that the Reunited Church should embody the congregational principle in its life and management. We do not say this, thinking of the democratic tendencies of our age. We do not see anything very exalted in much of what passes for democracy in our modern world. Our age does lip service to the idea of democracy, but in its heart it does not understand it. We do not say it because of the specially desirable condition of those Churches of the Independent order, where the local Church manages all its own affairs. We know full well that amongst them the Church Meeting is frequently of negligible importance. Few of the members take the trouble to attend it. We believe that those Churches

would be much wiser to insist on attendance at their Church Meetings than at their Communion Services, and if they began to exclude from membership all of those apathetic members who missed three successive Church Meetings without sending a valid excuse, they would soon be much healthier. They would have fewer of those unhappy Meetings from time to time. The only consideration on the other side is that the Church Meetings are but too commonly not worth attending. They are brief, formal, and negligible in every way, save on rare occasions, such, for instance, as when the choice of a new Minister is under consideration. We believe that the congregational principle should be embodied in the Reunited Church because we believe that every member of the Church should be given some share in the responsibility for the Church's work and witness. It will be observed that we do not urge that every member is entitled to a "say" in the Church's affairs. That too commonly is the position taken up by advocates of "democracy" in Church and State. We are not thinking of the *right* of every member to a voice, but of the *duty* of every member to share the responsibility. It is not a *right,* which can be exercised or not at will, but a *duty,* sacred and binding. Neglect of this duty should entail forfeiture of all right. Every member should share the responsibility of the Church. It is their Church. It is the people who make the Church, the men and women in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells.

They are all free men and women, made free by the Christ who dwells in them. They are citizens of the Kingdom, and we would give them a citizen's voice in the guidance of its affairs. Yet it should be remembered that they are only citizens in virtue of that indwelling Presence, and it is only in so far as they obey His will, and express His mind that they are faithful citizens. We believe in the congregational principle, but it will need to be revived. We also believe that it will need to be limited. But to this we shall return.

If congregationalism is to be revived, our Meetings for conference and business must not be just "cut and dried." They must not be just brief tags, at the end of some other Meeting, and, save on rare occasions, of a purely formal character. On the other hand, they must not be aimless and disordered. They must be above all things living, throbbing with vital interest in the work to which the Church is committed, in the condition of the Church, and in the policy of the Church.

III

We would charge the local Church with responsibility for its own finances, though by that we do not mean that we would preclude the possibility of its being assisted financially from Central funds. We would charge it with the responsibility for its own services of worship. We do

not mean merely the maintenance of the services of worship. We mean also with their ordering. We do not think it would be well to require uniformity in the services of worship throughout the whole Church. We would give the local Church the right to determine for itself what order its services should follow, and what changes should be from time to time adopted.

We would further charge the local Church with the authority to determine what new members should be admitted, in accordance with the principles already suggested, and what members should be disciplined. But we do not believe that just open discussion is generally advantageous on these matters.

We would suggest that each Church should have an elected Board of Officers, chosen for spiritual power and wisdom, to whom in the first place all applications for admission to the Church —either to junior membership or to full membership—should be made. It should be the duty of this Board to satisfy itself that the applicant is worthy. In some cases it would not be necessary for any special interview with the candidate. This would frequently be the case in small Churches, where practically every applicant would be personally well known to the whole Board. In many cases the personal interview of the Pastor of the Church would suffice to satisfy the Board, so far as it could be done by direct interview with the candidate. In others it might be deemed advisable to ask another member of the Board,

of especial sympathy and large-heartedness, to see the candidate. But the Board should in no case be satisfied with direct interview with the candidate. The parents and friends should also be seen, though the weight of their testimony would be determined not only by their attitude towards the candidate, but also by their attitude towards the Christian faith and the Church. If the Board is satisfied as to the genuineness and worth of the application, we suggest that the whole Church should be informed that the application is under consideration. Everyone who knows any reason why the candidate should or should not be admitted to membership should be invited to let some member of the Board know, and the information should be laid before the Board. We would especially urge that it is of as much importance that favourable testimony should be communicated as anything unfavourable, and it should be regarded as a definite duty of membership to communicate anything relevant. Any objection would be carefully looked into by the Board. If it still felt that the application was worthy, it would bring the name forward at the next Meeting of the Church, with a recommendation that the candidate be admitted to fellowship, together with a statement of the grounds of the recommendation. Any objection which had been made to the Board could then be made to the Church, if the objectors still felt that it ought to be made, and the Board would give its reasons for setting aside the objection. On no account

should any objection be allowed to be made in the Church Meeting that had not previously been made to the Board. This is not to stifle discussion, but to make it responsible. In the Independent Churches, where open discussion is allowed, the things which ought to be said are very frequently not said, while the things which ought not to be said are sometimes said. There are some who are reluctant to say in a Meeting what they know, who would be willing to say it privately. They should be encouraged to say it, not to their neighbour, but to the responsible officers of the Church, and it should be regarded as a duty to say it. On the other hand, there are not wanting those who will not say what they wish to say save in the publicity of a Meeting, where it is often impossible to examine at once the statements made. Where the character of another is at stake, no derogatory word should be said in the publicity of a Meeting, especially in the absence of the person concerned, without full opportunity being given for its truth to be examined, and anything that can be said on the other side to be said. It is so fatally easy to create a suspicion, or an unfavourable impression, that no amount of subsequent effort can remove. Our suggestions would not stifle discussion. They would leave everyone free to speak, provided he had communicated his objection first to the Board, and if a member was not sufficiently concerned for the honour of the Church prior to the Meeting to communicate it, we would not attach any weight

to his objection. We would leave the question of admission to be freely discussed by the Church, on the basis of the responsible evidence thus presented, and to be decided by the vote of the Meeting.

In the matter of discipline, we suggest that the Board should be charged in the first place with authority to act. Any member of the Church should be at liberty to bring before the Board cases where discipline is thought to be called for. Moreover, it should be regarded as the duty of the Board to be itself on the watch for such cases, feeling that the purity of the Church is its own especial responsibility. The Board should not wait until a charge is made to it, but whenever it feels that a member is unworthy in any respect, it should speak. It is foolish to wait until the matter has reached a developed stage, and has become a public scandal. Every case should be very carefully and tactfully examined. In many cases it might be sufficient to ask a member of the Board to see the defaulting member and gently remonstrate. An opportunity would be given to refute the charges made, or to urge any reasonable excuse. Should this have no effect, the Board might invite the unfaithful member to interview it, and unless he was able to convince them that the charge was without foundation, they should solemnly remonstrate with him. Should this have no effect, it is time to lay the matter before the Church. He should be notified that the matter will be

discussed, and should have the opportunity to be present and say what he can in his own defence. Even now we would give him a last opportunity before excluding him from the fellowship of the Church. Possibly the solemn warning in the presence of the whole Church, and the solemn disapprobation of the entire membership, would awaken a true repentance in his heart. But if it should not, at another Meeting, again after notification being made to him, his name should be deleted from the Roll, on the vote of the Meeting.

We would place other matters, too, in the province of the Church Meeting. Reference should be made to any noteworthy event, whether joyous or sorrowful, in the lives of the members. Here there will be sympathy at the illness or death of a near relation or friend, there congratulations on a son's success in some examination. Some public honour or some personal joy would be brought before the Church, that in a genuine spirit of fellowship and family affection the Church might rejoice with them that rejoice and sorrow with them that sorrow. The spirit of prayer should enter into all this; indeed, into every aspect of the Church Meeting. The realization of Christ's presence in the company of His people should be cultivated in every way. On every matter His will should be sought—not only in a formal prayer to Him at the commencement of the Meeting, but by direct appeal to Him before every decision is taken. There should be a few minutes

of quiet waiting upon Him before every important vote is taken—a few minutes of silent fellowship with Him, that He might illumine the mind, calm the spirit, and exert His influence. All of those private joys and sorrows to which reference is made should be commended to Him. The Church is a family. And He is of the family. He is its Head.

We would have, too, frequent conference in the Church Meeting on the spiritual condition of the Church, when the members in the spirit of common responsibility would be free to make their contribution to the Church's well-being.

IV

In all matters we would have an appeal allowed from the Church to a higher authority. We would have the congregational principle limited. We would see not only Churches, but a Church. The Churches might be grouped into Dioceses—whether known by that name or another is unimportant. There should be a Diocesan Board, consisting of representatives appointed by the local Churches. This Board should be generally responsible for the spiritual condition of all the Churches of the Diocese. At its head should be one who, whether or not he bears the name of Bishop, should be a genuine Overseer of the Churches, a true Father in God to all the people of the Diocese. For convenience we will refer to him as the Bishop. He should have free

right of visitation in all the Churches, and his task should be to promote in all ways possible the spiritual welfare of the Churches, and the efficiency of the various orders of the Ministry. He should constantly advise with the Diocesan Board, and should act under their authority, reporting to them and seeking their counsel. We would have this Diocesan Board the authority for the whole Diocese, both over Churches and Ministers. It would be its duty to take such action as it thought appropriate and necessary in any cases where the spiritual condition of the Church were low, or where there appeared to be a failure of duty.[36] Any matter on which appeal were made to it, or on which it felt it ought to take action, it would examine with the utmost care, giving both sides the fullest opportunity of expression.

The Chairman of these Diocesan Boards, or Bishops, should form a College, meeting to discuss the affairs of the Church as a whole, and striving to promote a uniform standard of life and purity throughout the whole Church. To this College of Bishops an appeal from the Diocesan Board should lie. It should be directly responsible to a National Assembly, consisting of representatives of all the Churches, meeting annually, to whose elected Council, and ultimately to which itself, an appeal would lie.

We believe that some such system would preserve all that is of most value in the various existing systems of Church government, and bind it into a unity, though our aim here, as throughout,

has not been to form a system out of selected elements of existing systems, but rather to seek that which gives most promise of serviceableness. It gives reality and weight to Church membership. It gives a real, though not unlimited, authority to the local Church, and the authority over the Church returns again ultimately to the Church itself.

CHAPTER X

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTRY

THERE is one important matter to which we have so far given no attention. Again it is a matter which has not been generally discussed in connection with Reunion. We refer to the method to be adopted in the appointment of the Ministry. Wide differences prevail in the systems of the various Churches, and in most Churches there is a good deal of dissatisfaction with their present arrangements.

I

We think that the patronage system, as at present practised, would hardly be seriously defended as ideal. The patron may be a man out of all sympathy with the local Church, or indeed with the Christian faith. In some cases the " gift " is thrown in with the purchase of a piece of property, a transaction with which it has no natural relation. Even if the patron be a sincere and earnest man, the temptations involved are too serious. It is so fatally easy to be swayed by considerations other than the welfare of the

Church. It is easy to be swayed by influence, or to react to fawning dependence. Quite apart from this, we believe the local Church is entitled to be consulted in the choice of the man whose spiritual ministrations will mean so much to its life and welfare. For the same reason we think that appointment by a Central Board is unsatisfactory. It is free from many of the objections of the patronage system, but it suffers from the defect that it robs the local Church of its right to a voice. Yet what of those Churches where the local Church has the sole voice? It is undoubted that there are grave flaws in their system. In too many cases a whole stream of "eligible" men visits the Church. The people come Sunday by Sunday in a critical frame of mind, until it becomes a very part of their mood of "worship," if the vacancy is long continued. They come, not to hear the Word of God, but to sit in judgment on His messenger. Various groups of the people form various preferences. But too commonly there is a real competition between two or more names, until finally an invitation is given by a majority vote, with a large minority. Sometimes much bad temper is engendered. The minority may leave the Church, but more frequently they remain to give the new Minister an uphill task for a long time, being filled with the Christian determination to make his ministry a failure and so prove their opposition to have been justified. One of the most serious objections, even where perfect harmony prevails, is the length of the

vacancy that often occurs, and the rapid disintegration of the Church during the interregnum.

II

We would suggest that the Diocesan Board should be charged with responsibility, jointly with the Church, in this matter of settlements. We would suggest that when a vacancy occurs, this Board should give serious attention to the needs of the Church, to the character of its work, and to the type of Minister it requires for the successful carrying on of its work. We would then have them propose to the Church the man who, in their considered judgment, would make the best and most suitable Minister for it. In no case should a man so proposed be a mere name to the Board. It should know something of him and his character, abilities and past work, and if possible, should have had an interview with him. He on his part will have made some inquiries about the Church, and will have given some indication of whether he would be likely to give serious consideration to an invitation from it. The Board would thus not merely suggest him as a " possible " Minister. It would definitely and responsibly recommend the Church to invite him to its Ministry. The Church should then be free to ask him to visit it, so that the members may form their own impressions of him, and he of them. They should be warned against judging him merely by his sermons of the day,

and by the readiness of his utterance—which may be no fair sample of his pulpit power. They should try to find the real personality behind it all, to get to know the kind of man he is, and should ask themselves whether he is likely to prove attractive and helpful to them. He, on his part, will form his impressions of them. The Church will then decide whether or not it will act on the recommendation of the Board, and he whether he will accept their invitation.

Should the Church, however, itself know a man who it believes would make a suitable Minister—perhaps one who has on a former occasion visited it—it should be entitled, on a vote of the Church Meeting, to bring his name before the Diocesan Board. The Board would then consider his suitability and would consult him as to his probable attitude to an invitation. If the Board felt that it was a suitable suggestion, it would then recommend him to the Church. Unless the Minister had but recently visited the Church, he would be invited to visit them, and if they and he still favoured the settlement, the invitation would be given and accepted. If the Board considered him an unsuitable Minister for them, it would naturally be expected to give reasons for withholding its recommendation.

The invitation should thus be given by the local Church, but in no case without the previous recommendation of the Diocesan Board. This Board and the Church would be in the fullest sense jointly responsible for the settlement, and neither's

endorsement of the invitation should be merely formal. Should a vacancy be long continued, the Diocesan Board should have authority to appoint a Minister without confirmation by the local Church, save in special cases, such, for instance, as where a Church has issued a valid invitation, which has been for any reason declined.

This method of invitation might apply, we believe, to all orders of full-time Ministry attached to the local Church. In those cases where it is a Ministry exercised without withdrawing from secular occupation, the position is different, in that such workers must be chosen from within the Church. The local Church in such cases will know far more about them than the Diocesan Board, and we would leave it entirely free to appoint them itself, subject to the already discussed provision, that the Church, as a whole, could only recognize the ministry of those who were in one of its various orders.

III

We would have it clearly understood that a Church is expected to be loyal to its Minister, once it has invited him. The readiness with which many Churches are disloyal to their Ministers is appalling, even in the case of those Churches which have by their own vote invited their Ministers. If a mistake has been made, they should realize that they are themselves to blame, and they should not penalize the Minister and the

work for their own folly. We believe that both the Diocesan Board and the local Church, since both should co-operate in the issuing of the invitation, should also co-operate in fullest loyalty to the Minister. Here we think the Bishop could render invaluable help. In cases where a widening breach is appearing between Minister and people —it may not be anything of the nature of a quarrel, but perhaps a growing lack of sympathy—the Bishop should immediately endeavour to understand the situation and give sympathetic help. We would have both the Church and the Minister free to appeal to the Bishop for help in any matter, and particularly in any matter affecting the relations between them. But in most cases the Bishop, if he were a man of discernment, would not need to be appealed to before he became aware of growing estrangement, and he would not wait for things to reach a crisis. Should the Church feel for any reason that a change of ministry were desirable, the Bishop should always be appealed to. In many cases it would be nothing very serious, and his tactful and sympathetic help might bring Minister and people heartily together again. Sometimes it would be necessary for him gravely to rebuke the Minister for neglect of duty ; sometimes to rebuke the Church for fickleness and disloyalty. In some cases it would appear that it would be best for the ministry to terminate. Perhaps some genuine incompatibility of temperament between Minister and people, or a clear indication that the ministry had outlasted its use-

fulness, would become apparent. This would not necessarily imply any fault whatever on either side. In all such cases, the Diocesan Board should be asked to sanction the termination of the ministry, and to seek a new sphere for the Minister. In no case should the Church be free to terminate the ministry without the sanction of the Diocesan Board, any more than it should be free to issue the invitation to the ministry without their co-operation.

We would add to this, that the Minister should not be free to terminate his ministry without the same sanction.

Disloyalty is not confined to the Churches. There are Ministers who strongly feel that their Churches ought to be loyal to them—and by that they mean let them do whatever they like—but who also feel that they ought to be free at any time to bid farewell to the Churches, should a more imposing position or a larger stipend be offered them. There are not wanting men who will lead a Church into a policy of considerable expense, and when they have got the Church hopelessly in debt, will move on without shame, leaving the mess for someone else to clear up. We believe that a greater spirit of mutual responsibility and mutual loyalty is vitally necessary.

IV

The question of the length of ministry is of some importance. In some Churches, at the

present time, there is no time limit, and no way of bringing to an end an unsuitable ministry. In some of the Independent Churches, though there is no time limit, the people find a ready means to bring a ministry to an end when it has become tiresome to them. They do everything possible to make the Minister uncomfortable, and even withhold subscriptions, in order to "starve him out." [37] The whole position is then scandalous, and utterly anti-Christian. In other Churches—such as the Methodist bodies—all appointments are in the first place for a definite period. The Churches have the option of renewing the invitation, but the proportion of those doing so is not large, and the majority of their ministries last for three years. We are convinced that this is far from ideal. Nearly every great ministry, nearly every ministry that has exercised an abiding influence on a Church or a community, has been a lengthy one, for no man can develop the best that is in him, if he is just to go touring amongst the Churches, putting in three years here and three years there. Yet it is significant that the Independent Churches of the Baptist wing are moving fast in this same direction. In order to remedy the evils of the pastorate that has outlived its usefulness, and to avoid the scandal of the "starving out" policy, Churches are increasingly inviting men for definite periods, generally for three or five years, occasionally for seven years. We do not think that this is ideal either. Seven years, or even five years, is too long to be com-

mitted to an unsuitable ministry, while the shorter term is too short to be made the normal for a ministry. It may, of course, be extended, but the presumption in the minds of both Minister and people is that it will not. We believe in long ministries. When a man finds his true sphere, he should be able to do an abiding work, endearing himself increasingly to his people, and exerting a profound influence on the whole community. His first charge is somewhat different. He is less able to estimate Churches or his own powers till he has been in the ministry, and his first charge may well be a brief one. He will probably make a number of mistakes at first, while he is learning to find his feet, mistakes which would sometimes embarrass him if he remained for long, but from which he has learned valuable lessons to be remembered for the future. So we would not complain if his first charge were of short duration. But after that, a man should settle down to do some solid work. If he cannot through all his life sustain a ministry for more than three years in any Church, he probably has very little contribution to make to the world's betterment. On the other hand, we are well aware that every man cannot sustain a ministry of twenty years satisfactorily. To maintain freshness and virility throughout such a period requires rich reserves of character and ability. But men who are worth their salt should be able to maintain a ministry of ten years' duration. The suggestions we make would allow ministries of such length and even

longer, without committing either Church or Minister to them from the beginning, and would leave an honourable means of terminating them earlier, should it become advisable. They would not commit the Church to a ministry of so long as three years, if it proved to be an unsuitable one. It should be made quite clear that we do not only contemplate appeals to the Bishop in bad blood. They need not always be made in the spirit of strife or bitterness. Indeed, any appeal that is made in such a spirit is to be regretted. It should be recognized that many a good man, who could do splendid work in one sphere may be entirely crippled in another. Moreover, an important change of circumstances may take place in the Church, that may not be without serious effect on the ministry. Further, there comes a time when every man has finished the work he really has to do in a Church. He does not always recognize when he has reached this stage, nor for that matter does the Church always realize when he has not reached it, but when it is reached there is nothing dishonourable to him in its recognition. If either Minister or people feel that the existing arrangement is not for the best, in full mutual respect they might ask the Bishop to consider whether it is not time to ask the Diocesan Board to sanction the termination of the ministry. The Bishop would always give serious and careful attention to the matter, and see whether it were really best to "recognize the facts," or whether it were merely

some passing phase, during which the Church and the Minister were not seeing the best that was in one another, or calling it forth.

V

The appointment of the Bishops would be of crucial importance to the whole scheme. While they would act under the authority of their Dioceasn Board, and ultimately under the authority of the General Assembly and its Council, they would have considerable personal authority and influence. They would therefore need to be appointed with great care, and would require to be men of exceptional wisdom, tact, sympathy and humility. Anyone who entered on this office to become a lord of the Church would be utterly false to the essential requirement of his office. His great preeminence should be in service, and in that alone. We would suggest that just as the local Ministers should be appointed by the local Churches, on the recommendation of the Diocesan Board, so the Bishops should be appointed by the Diocesan Boards, on the recommendation of the elected Council of the National Assembly. No election should be valid unless endorsed by both bodies. Further, just as we would allow the Church to suggest to the Diocesan Board the name of the man it would like to see as its Minister, so the Diocesan Board should be free to suggest to the National Council the name of the man it would like to see as its Bishop. The present

system of appointing Bishops is, of course, doomed. Every discussion of Reunion takes it for granted that the Episcopacy should be "reformed" so far as the method of its appointment is concerned at any rate, and that the highest officers of the Church ought not to be appointed by politicians—sometimes by men who do not even belong to the Church whose Bishops they appoint.

VI

This raises the whole question of the relation of the Church and the State, and the issue of Disestablishment. We do not propose to go into it in detail, though it would not be honest to avoid it altogether, for in the minds of many it is of first rate importance. It is widely assumed that any Reunited Church must be disestablished. We are not at all sure that it will be a good thing if it is. So long as there are several separate Churches, actively working for the spiritual good of the community, all exercising valid Christian ministry, we believe that it is unhealthy that one of these Churches alone should have the patronage of the State, and so enjoy a prestige as against the sister Churches which is often far from Christian. But if the Churches do unite, we are not at all sure that the position will not be materially altered. We think it would be altogether for good that the State should profess its regard for the Christian faith, and that the public ceremonies of the State should be accompanied

by prayer and thanksgiving to God. The State should recognize that its common life is not divorced from the will of God, but that it is only in so far as its activities have Divine sanction, only in so far as it is embodying in them the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that they truly have worth. But the State should most certainly not control the Church. The Church should be free to declare to the community those fundamental spiritual principles which should underlie its life, and the State should honour the Church for this, its great public ministry. The Church should be established, that is, officially recognized, but neither the State should control the Church, nor the Church the State. Each should be free within its own sphere to make its own laws. We would neither have Church legislation passed through the Houses of Parliament, nor the Officers of the Church, as such, sit in the Upper House. The crucial question, of course, is money. The supporters of disestablishment urge that the Church cannot have State money without State control. The opponents of disestablishment feel that the Church cannot have disestablishment and retain the State endowments. The one side urges disestablishment to free the Church from control; the other opposes because it wants the money. We believe the question of money ought to be very secondary. The State should publicly recognize the Church, and to that extent it should be established. If the State should make some grant from public funds to help the Church carry on

its great work, we believe it would be the wisest expenditure it incurred, and the most profitable for the community. There is no service more truly patriotic than that of the Churches. There is no citizen who is of more honour to the State than the Christian citizen. But the Church should be entirely free from control, either open or implied. And the grant should be open to every branch of the Church, since all are alike ministering to the well-being, the highest well-being of the State.

It may be said that inevitably the very fact of the money being received would close the Church's mouth on many questions. It would have to spare any criticism of the State's activities, if it were taking State money. But why? Does that principle hold in relation to Members of Parliament? Does it hold with ex-Ministers of the Crown? Are not many of these in receipt of public money, yet wholeheartedly opposing many of the activities of the State? They receive public money, not as the price of their support of the State's policy, but in return for the earnest and sincere efforts they are supposed to make, or to have made, to guide that policy into paths of wisdom. Let that same principle be acknowledged to lie behind the State's benefactions to the Church, and the same freedom be allowed to the Church, and we do not think much complaint can be made. Yet we are bound to confess that we do not set much store by the State's money. We believe a true and faithful Church richly deserves it, but

we do not think it will be very vitally impoverished if it is withheld ; and if it cannot be given together with freedom, we believe it were best not received. If the Church is exercising a vital ministry to the world, we think it can well rely on the loving generosity of those it is helping.

VII

There are still some orders of the ministry whose appointment we have not considered, and to those we will return. There are those attached to the group or Diocese—such as Evangelists, Sunday School advisers, Organizing advisers. These we would suggest should be appointed by the Diocesan Board. Their services should be freely at the disposal of the Churches inviting them, but we would not give them authority to press their services uninvited. If, however, there was particular need for their services at any time, the Diocesan Board, acting through the Bishop, should in the first place suggest their help being sought, and if necessary require the Church to receive it. In cases where a Diocesan officer is charged with definite responsibility for some aspect of the life and work of the local Churches of a particular group, such as organization or Sunday School work, he would naturally have free right of visitation and supervision of his own branch of work. In such cases his appointment would be agreed to by the Churches committed to his charge, and he would be as much their Minister in charge, for this

particular aspect of the work, as though he were attached to but one Church. Where the Diocesan officer was merely an adviser, he would await invitation or special authority from the Diocesan Board.

As to the suggested order covering the type of work now done by the Salvation Army, we would commit that work and all its appointments to a special Board, acting under the direct authority of the National Council. Similarly, all appointments for scholarship we would entrust to a special Board, under the same authority. It would appoint some to positions in the training Institutions, in consultation with the governing bodies of those Institutions, some to research work in one or other branch of Christian learning, some to literary work. Their work is outside the range of ordinary Church organization, yet it is of profound importance to the whole Church. We have further suggested an order of Prophets, though we ventured to doubt whether it could be anything but a posthumous order. If a real order of Prophets could be formed, we would have them also appointed by a Board, acting under the authority of the National Council. In the case of these three Boards, it might well be the Board responsible for admission to the order that is charged with subsequent appointments—and indeed with everything connected with the well-being and usefulness of the order.

In these suggestions we have outlined a system which we believe would go far to meet the needs of the Church. It happens that it preserves much

of the existing three main types of Church organization, though again we repeat that that has not been our express aim. It includes a congregational element, a presbyteral element, and an episcopal element, though all are modified by the inclusion of the others. It combines the principles of freedom and authority, and links the Churches together into a Church. Men who wish to see the system of their own Church predominate in the Reunited Church will see little good in it, whatever Church they belong to. But those who are prepared to think with unbiassed mind of the good that is in other systems, may reach the conclusion that it has something at least to be said for it. It is not claimed that it is perfect, though it aims to be, for any less aim is unworthy of the Gospel which is the Church's great trust.

CHAPTER XI

FINANCE

THE subject of the finance of the Reunited Church is a very large one, and we cannot attempt to consider it at all exhaustively here. It would require very full and careful attention, which could only be given by an expert Committee, having at its disposal a great mass of information which is not generally accessible. It would need to know the probable resources on which the Church could count, and the entire range of the work to which it was committed. We can, here, only suggest a few principles that we think should be regarded as guiding.

I

We believe the great inequalities in the remuneration of Ministers are unhealthy. It is well for Ministers to be ambitious, but we would have them ambitious to serve more widely and more effectively, not ambitious to draw a higher salary, or to live in greater worldly state and honour. In saying this, we are not thinking alone, or even primarily, of the oft attacked large salaries of Bishops. We realize that a good part of their allowance is not personal

salary at all, but what in any other walk of life would be set down as office and administrative expenses. We recognize that many Bishops are poor men on their large incomes. We think that the present system in this matter stands doubly condemned—in the first place because it gives to individuals such princely sums, altogether disproportionate to the salaries of many hardworking and efficient Ministers, and in the second place, because, having given them these large sums, it forthwith proceeds to reduce them to poverty. Such a system is but a system *pour rire*. But not alone in their case do we think that change is necessary. We would see less inequality in the general remuneration of Ministers. We would not see the clergyman of a small village in receipt of a larger income than the clergyman of an important town parish, when the latter does many times as much work as the former. We would not see the Minister who works amongst poor people less paid than the Minister who works amongst rich people, without further reason. But on the other hand, we do not advocate flat equality in Ministerial remuneration.

II

The system adopted by many Foreign Missionary Societies has something to teach us. They give to their workers not salaries, but maintenance allowances. The allowance is not supposed to be proportionate to the amount of work they do, or to

its importance. The Missionary is maintained at a certain economic level of comfort. In general, his allowance depends on his obligations. It varies according as he is married or single, according as he has, or has not, any family. There are also other differences. It varies according to the length of his service, though not by annual increments. There may be two advances at certain stages of service, but beyond these there is no financial prospect for the Missionary. The Missionaries of the same Society in different fields of service do not receive the same allowance. They receive what is believed to be sufficient to maintain them at the same level of comfort.

We believe this principle should be introduced into the ministry in general. The remuneration should be according to the needs of the worker—a maintenance allowance, rather than a salary. It would not necessarily be the same for the different orders of workers. Indeed, we do not think it should be, though for all workers within the same order we think there should be a general equality. This does not mean that all should receive the same amount of money. We would vary it according to a man's family obligations, according to whether he lived in a large town or in a country village, and also according to the length of his service. We think that after a man has honourably served the Church for a period of years, he should be encouraged with a larger allowance, though we would not see a long ladder with many rungs here. The guiding principle in fixing the

standard of allowance for the different orders of workers should be the needs of the particular type of man likely to comprise the order. The scholar, for instance, would need to receive sufficient to enable him to buy the books, many of them particularly expensive, that his work would require.[38]

In accordance with the principle that Ministers received, not a salary, but a maintenance allowance, we believe the Church should undertake responsibility for them when, through breakdown in health, or the advance of age, they were no longer able to serve the Churches in an active capacity.

It would have to be decided what, if any, allowance should be made to those Ministers of the Church who were in orders that did not require their full time, and who were deriving an income from secular occupation—such, for instance, as Sunday School teachers and workers amongst the young, and many of the local Church organizers. Workers of this kind who were serving the Churches in a full time capacity should most certainly receive an allowance, though it is debatable whether others, who are receiving money from secular occupation, should receive anything or not. On the principle that the remuneration given to the ministry is not a salary but a maintenance allowance, it would seem that whenever workers are deriving a full income from secular occupation, they should not expect to receive Church funds. Aged workers of these orders, however, if they are in financial need, should be entitled to assistance from the Church.

III

We think the Church as a whole should guarantee the allowances of its recognized Ministers. Yet the local Church should feel a special responsibility towards its own Ministers. We think the local Church should raise as much as it possibly can towards the support of its Minister or Ministers, as well as finance its general work. We think the same standard should be expected of the whole Church in this respect. We do not mean that rich and poor should be expected to give equally. But we do mean that one Church should not be expected to develop a greater spirit of generosity than another merely because the one has a heavy endowment and the other has none. We think that everywhere people ought to be made to feel the privilege and the duty of being partners in bearing the burden of the Lord's work, and that all should give liberally of their means. But if a Church is not able to support its Minister or Ministers completely, it should be helped from Central funds. We suggest that all endowments should belong to the Church as a whole, and be centrally administered. The local Church should undertake to raise an agreed amount towards its required expenses, and if possible should exceed this amount. But the balance of its need should be promised from Central Funds. Further, as to the number of Ministers a Church should have, we think that should depend entirely on the character of the work and its actual needs, and not in any

way upon the wealth of the local community. This number should be arranged by the Diocesan Board in consultation with the Church, and should not depend on local Funds in any way. It should depend on the needs of the Church, and on the resources of the Church as a whole. A similar standard in this matter should be applied to all Churches of similar needs. Where more than one Minister is maintained in a Church, they should not be of the same order, but should belong to different orders, and should each be responsible for some branch of the work.

IV

It goes without saying that we would not have aided Churches subjected to any more interference or control than the unaided Churches.[39] We would see all Churches in exactly the same relationship to the Diocesan or Central authority. We have already said that we would give to the Bishop, acting under the authority of the Diocesan Board, the right to visit any Church, and to inquire into any aspect of its life and work. We would bring the finances of every Church equally within the purview of the Diocesan Board. In the case of every Church, aided and unaided, we think the Church should raise an agreed amount towards the maintenance of its ministry and work. This amount should be based on the numbers and general economic level of the members. There would have to be some difference owing to the

different level of generosity prevailing in the different local Churches, but Churches which have a tradition of scant generosity should be helped to see their duty in this matter, and efforts should be made to get them to take their fair share of the burden. Beyond the agreed amount a grant would have to be made in many cases from Central funds. In other cases from the agreed amount a sum could be paid into the Central funds. This would be regarded not merely as a case of the strong helping the weak, but as a contribution from those Churches able to make it towards the maintenance of the Bishops, and of those orders of the Ministry not connected with any local Church, but from whose work all the local Churches should benefit. Such Ministers should be in all cases centrally maintained. There should, in our judgment, be absolutely no difference of attitude adopted in any respect towards those Churches which were aided and those which aided. Merely because a Church consists of a great number of members, or of wealthy members, it should not be any differently treated from a Church which may be few in numbers, but equally generous in its giving, or poor but equally sacrificial in spirit. We would have Churches honoured, not according to the numbers of their members, nor according to the amount of their contributions, but according to the wealth of love that animates the Church, and the spirit of sacrifice that lies behind the gifts.

V

We would see the Foreign Missionary work of the Reunited Church financed in the same way. Foreign Missions are to-day an integral part of the Christian witness, and we would see this work brought into official relation with the Reunited Church. We do not think it is well that it should be left to be done by voluntary Societies—often closely connected with particular Denominations, indeed, but in most cases without the Denomination accepting any official responsibility for them. Let them be recognized for the integral part of our witness that they are. We would see them administered by a Board of the Church, and we would have the Church undertake responsibility for their finances. We think the Churches should be asked to raise an agreed amount or more every year for this work, in exactly the same way as they are asked to raise an agreed amount for their own work, and if the sums forthcoming are insufficient to maintain the work for which the Church has authorized its Foreign Board to care, a sum should be granted from its Central exchequer to make up the deficiency.

It may be asked where all the money is to come from for all the things we have suggested. We do not think we have suggested any increase of the present liabilities and expenses. In many towns and villages existing Churches could be closed if Reunion came about, and properties sold. In many cases where there are at present several curates,

the numbers could be reduced. These changes would be a considerable offset against the increase of workers in other cases by the bringing in of men of different orders to work together in the Churches. While we have suggested many forms of detached ministry, it should be remembered that in every Church to-day there are many detached ministries. Moreover, the centralization of the endowments of the Church would have considerable consequences. We believe that our suggestions, if acted upon, would do much to bring order into the finances of the Reunited Church, and to introduce a common spirit of generosity and sacrifice throughout the whole Church. It would help men to realize that Christianity stands not alone for a partnership in fellowship, but for partnership in witness, and for partnership in giving.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

We are conscious that there are many aspects of the great question of Reunion that we have not even touched upon. We are conscious that those we have dealt with are by no means exhaustively treated. But we recognized at the outset that the Ideal Church which we seek can only be found by corporate thinking in an atmosphere of sincerity and humility, and in the complete absence of prejudice. It is but hoped that we may have made some little contribution to that corporate thinking, that we may have stimulated thought on some of the neglected aspects, as well as on those which have hitherto monopolized all the attention. Criticism has not been spared. It has been levelled against existing conditions in every Church, and against the proposals for Reunion hitherto put forward, but in no case has it been merely destructive criticism, or criticism for its own sake. We have in every case endeavoured to suggest something which we believe to be better. We are well aware that criticism is easier than constructive thinking, but we do not desire to be of those who take the safe path of destruction

without making any suggestions to help the Church to a truer and better way.

It may be felt again and again that we have proposed an undue multiplicity of Boards. Yet, let whoever thinks so, reflect on the enormous number of our voluntary Societies to-day, each with its own Council, and reflect how many there are of these whose present activities are provided for in our suggestions, and reflect, too, on the great number of Denominational Boards existing to-day that would be incorporated in the Reunited Church, and he may conclude that after all we have suggested too radical a simplification. Instead of multiplying we have reduced. Moreover, though it may seem that we have proposed a large number of ministries detached from the local Churches, it will probably be found that they are but a handful compared with the legions of detached ministries at present exercised in one way or another.

We have not consciously baulked any problem. We may be asked : " What about the international relations of the Church? " We have discussed only the Church within the British Isles, and its Foreign Missionary work, but we think it will be clear that there would be little difficulty about the system becoming worldwide. Churches in every land adopting the suggestions we have made could have representatives on an International Board which would endeavour to bring a common standard of life and witness into the Church universal. The Ideal Church, towards which we have looked, could

well be the Universal Church. Some will perhaps say in horror : " But what about the Roman Catholic Church? Do you calmly contemplate union with it? " We contemplate union with any Church which is ready to unite to build up the body of Christ. We neither contemplate union with an unchanged Roman Church nor with any other unchanged Church. We contemplate the Ideal Church, gathering into itself those of every nation who truly belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and are citizens of His Kingdom. We do not contemplate a Church which shall be but a federation of heterogeneous elements. We contemplate a Church which, while allowing considerable liberty of conviction and ceremonial practice on some matters, shall be filled with a common spirit and a common ideal, which shall throb with love for the Lord Jesus Christ and the passion to serve men. We contemplate one true Church. We have had but one guiding principle throughout. The true Church must be such that it has a place for every genuine follower of Jesus Christ, that it will welcome all who are members of the Kingdom of God, and that it must neither welcome nor receive those who are not. It must have an ideal of life and purity, and it must see to it that that ideal is embodied in all its experience, both corporate and individual.

We look forward to the day when the Church shall be one and holy, fair and lovely as a Bride adorned for her Husband. For the day of a true and worthy Reunion we wait eagerly. But

any other Reunion would be a calamity. Let it not be born of convenience or fear, let its form not be determined by prestige or influence. Let it be found in the humble search for the Ideal, in the laying aside of every prejudice, in the readiness to lay aside everything that is not of the perfect Church, rather than in the spirit of minimum concessions. The road will be a long one. We see little of the spirit in the rank and file of the Churches, or for that matter in the bulk of the Ministers, that will lead us to our goal. We see little of the spirit of fearless courage that will be imperatively required. Yet are we not without hope. We believe that a vision has been seen which will not again be lost sight of, and that though stumblingly and falteringly, the Churches will press forward and upward and homeward, until the Ideal is brought down into the actual, and Christ dwells wholly in His Church, manifesting Himself fully in all her life and fellowship, and reaching the world gloriously through her witness, gathering unto Himself in all places those for whom He died, and for whom He lives.

NOTES

1. There are, of course, individuals who have much to say on them, but the Church as a corporate body has nothing to say. It passes formal condemnation on them in the abstract, in its general teaching, but it continues to receive and to exalt these unworthy members.
2. Cf. Report of the Conference between Representatives of the Church of England and the Federal Council of the Free Churches, issued over the signatures of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., D.D., Section II, Par. 8 : " In view of the fact that the Episcopate was from early times and for many centuries accepted, and by the greater part of Christendom is still accepted . . . we agree that it ought to be accepted . . . for the United Church of the future " (This Report is hereafter cited in the footnotes as " Report ").
3. Acts i, 15–26.
4. It should not be forgotten that even in the case of Matthias there is no mention of any laying on of hands.
5. Acts vi, 1–6.
6. Acts xv, 13 ff ; Gal. i, 19.
7. Gal. i, 11–24.
8. Acts xiii, 1–3.
9. Cf. Acts xx, 17 ; *id.* 28.
10. Cf. Report II, 9 : " In view of the place which the Council of Presbyters and the congregation of the faithful had in the constitution of the early Church, and the preservation of these elements of presbyteral and congregational order in large sections of Christendom, we agree that they should be maintained with a representative and constitutional Episcopate as permanent elements in the order and life of the United Church."
11. Report I, 4 : " This one Church consists of all those who have been, or are being, redeemed by and in Christ, whether in this world or in the world beyond our sight."
12. It will be clear that we do not mean by Evangelist what is too commonly understood nowadays. We do not mean a

man who goes from Church to Church holding series of highly emotional meetings, and in most cases never revisiting the Churches. In too many cases this type of Evangelist receives an honour altogether out of proportion to his service to the Churches. He has a limited number of sermons which he repeats until there is scarcely a verbal variation. He has nothing like the long and arduous hours of work that most ministers have to put in. He has nothing like the variety of problems and worries that a minister has daily to face. For all the careful preparation and organization that his Mission requires he has to depend on the local ministers, and if any abiding fruits are garnered it is the ministers who have either prepared the ground for his seed, or who have to give patient and constant attention to its growth. The Evangelist of this type doubtless has to bear very great nervous strain—a strain which is good neither for him nor for his hearers. We recognize that there is an emotional element in all true religion, but the religion that exhausts itself in emotion is of little value, and the atmosphere of many Mission services is neither good nor fruitful in lasting results. We know that not all are of this type, and that there are some Evangelists who deliver a strong and virile message, the reasoned appeal of God's love to the human soul, and we think there might well be a few such set apart for this peripatetic ministry. But the Evangelist whose service is of greater importance to the Church is he whose voice is frequently heard, bearing in common days and without elaborate staging, the gracious invitation of God.

13. It should go without saying that we mean to imply that more than a ready utterance is required before recognition is given. A man must give some indication that he has a real message from God to deliver, and that he understands what he speaks about, as well as that he has real powers of public speaking. If we contemplate the continuance of what is at present called lay preaching—though for ourselves we do not call any true preaching "lay," nor any true preacher a layman, but in so far as he is a preacher a minister—we do not contemplate the present haphazard system. We think it should be regulated and its quality improved.

14. Report I, 6 (*b*).

15. It may be said that we have ourselves excluded the Friends, since we have laid so much emphasis on Ministry, while the Friends do not recognize any ministry. This is a misleading statement of the case, however. The Friends do, not employ the term Minister, in the usual sense, but they

have many who are exercising the functions which we have urged should be recognized as ministry. Moreover, we have said that there is no reason why these functions should not be exercised in many cases by men who have not withdrawn from secular occupation. We have urged that all service rendered to the cause of the Kingdom is ministry, and that the more members the Church has exercising ministry the better. We do not think many Quakers would raise serious objection against this position. Moreover, it should be added that the Friends have a number of workers who are rendering full-time service to the Society, and who are maintained out of the Funds of the Society. They have a ministry in all but name, and it will appear later that we view the question of the payment of the ministry in very much the same way as the Friends,—not as payment for work done, but as maintenance to free the worker for his service.

16. Augustine: "Ex amante animo accenditur alius."
17. Acts xix, 1–7.
18. Acts viii, 14–17.
19. Report III, 4, 6.
20. Cf. Report III, 2, 3: "The supreme standard of truth is the revelation of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as summed up in Jesus Christ. As the Church in its corporate capacity confesses Christ before men, there should be in the United Church a formal statement of its corporate faith in Christ as an expression of what is intellectually implied by its confession of Him."
21. Report III, 7: "When assent to the Creeds is required by the United Church, such assent should not be understood to imply the acceptance of them as a complete expression of the Christian faith, or as excluding reasonable liberty of interpretation."
22. Report III, 1.
23. Report III, 8.
24. Report III, 4.
25. Report III, 7.
26. Report III, 1: "In a united Church there must be unity of Faith, which implies both the subjective element of personal adhesion and an objective standard of truth."
27. It may be said that what is meant is that it is a sufficient test of the faith of those who are to minister to the Church, but in that case, why need it be liturgically used in the services of worship? If that is really what is meant by its sufficiency, it should be reserved for ordination services. But it is precisely those who minister who understand best how to extract a sense from the Creed utterly at variance

with that which ordinary people, in so far as they gain any impression from it, find. It is, indeed, no test of their real faith whatever.

28. Report III, 5.
29. See *The Faith of the Apostles' Creed.*
30. Report, I, 2.
31. Report, I, 6 (*c*).
32. Report, I, 7.
33. It will be observed that we do not say that none of them should have the conviction of sin. That will depend entirely on their sin. We would expect a conviction of sin only in accordance with the sin committed, and in the case of boys and girls reared in a pure atmosphere, who had been guarded from many temptations, and whose soul had grown naturally into Christ, the conviction of sin would be very slight. It would be later in life, when they were facing the world for themselves that they would come face to face with sin, and it would try to gain a stronghold in their hearts. In the case of boys and girls who had been less shielded by home influence, who had earlier found contact with evil and in whose hearts it had already gained a home, there would be a genuine conviction of sin. We may add, that by sin, we mean more than thoughts and acts of sexual impurity. We mean greed, selfishness, pride, strife, bitterness, envy, lying, heartlessness, and much beside. In the secluded atmosphere of the home there may be no consciousness of these things in some who with the beginning of life's battle will make their acquaintance.
34. It will be at this stage that most of those who choose to be baptized will be immersed. It may be asked what point there would be in it for those who had no profound conviction of sin, and for whom the decision to follow Christ was not coupled with crisis and repentance. We have said that we would not demand that all should be baptized, but we think that even in the case of such as these, baptism has a significance. We remember, that even He Who was far purer than any of them ; He Who was Purity and Sinlessness itself, was yet baptized. For while repentance is normally one of the elements of the significance of Baptism, it is not the only one We remember that at Ephesus Paul rebaptized the disciples of Apollos, who had been baptized into the baptism of repentance, baptizing them into the Name of Jesus. To them this Baptism was the symbol of personal decision to serve Jesus, and the beginning of the new life whose law should be Christ. To those pure youths and maidens whose hearts have grown up from childhood into

Christ, baptism may mean the taking upon themselves of the pledge of life service to Him, the definite acceptance of His law, the irrevocable decision to follow Him, and the entering on the life of professed discipleship.

35. Report, I, 5: "This visible Church was instituted by Christ as a fellowship of men united with Him, and in Him with one another."

36. In discussing discipline we did not refer to the disciplining of ministers for breach of duty. All breach of duty is a breach of faith, and we have said that breach of faith, eminently calls for discipline. It is therefore manifest that we do not think that ministerial failure should pass unnoticed, whether it be in the Sunday School or the pulpit. As to the authority for ministerial discipline, we would suggest that in the case of ministry exercised under the authority of the local Church—such as ministry to the young in the Sunday School and elsewhere—the local Church should have authority to discipline; where it is a ministry exercised to the Church itself, we would make the Diocesan Board the disciplining authority.

37. It should be noted that Independency commonly means anything but independence for the Minister.

38. Needless to say the peripatetic Evangelist would not receive the extravagant sums that some of them at present receive.

39. We know that many of the stronger Churches of the Independent order would offer much resistance here. Independency in the abstract is not specially in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament. It is not particularly Christian for the large Churches to have splendid premises and well-paid Ministers, and everything they need, while the smaller Churches, especially in the villages or in poor districts, should be miserably housed, should have Ministers living almost in starvation, and no decent equipment. To an unbiassed observer that is just heartless selfishness. It is therefore but natural that independency has always been rather better than its principle, and that it has always cherished something of another principle. Often a strong Church has taken a weaker Church under its wing and helped it. But it has invariably helped itself to the independence of the aided Church. Money has always been the prime power, and where there has been no financial independence there has been very little other. Modern Independency tends to exercise this thoroughly Christian ministry of helping the weak and the sharing of burdens through Central funds rather than through direct service. But unfortunately the same spirit of differentiation enters in. The aided Church

not only has to submit to the scrutiny of its Balance Sheet, and, if required, to submit its Books for examination, but it has not the same freedom in inviting to the Pastorate. It can only invite approved men. In short, its independence is restricted, and it is tacitly agreed that independence is the best system only for those strong Churches that can be financially independent. It will have been apparent that we agree with this restriction of independence, but that we believe it is equally good for all the Churches. We think it is unchristian to exalt money to be the lord of the Church by giving the financially independent Churches a different status from the rest. It is equally unchristian of those Churches to ask it.

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